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MERCURY

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HOMOSEXUALITY IN AMERICAN CULTURE: <i>The New Taste in Literature</i>	Alfred Towne	3
IN THE MERCURY'S OPINION		10
GRAVEDIGGERS OF AMERICA; <i>Part II: How Stalin's Disciples Review Books</i>	Ralph de Toledano	14
WITHERED ON THE VINE, <i>A Story</i>	Armand Kashmanian	21
FRANK SINATRA CONFIDENTIAL: <i>Gangsters in the Night Clubs</i>	Lee Mortimer	29
THE GENTLE GRAFTERS, OR HOW TO GET ALONG IN MEXICO CITY	Jean Malaquais	37
THE CHARACTER OF THE LOVER, <i>A Story</i>	Wright Morris	43
FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE:		
<i>Ghostly Clankings in Berlin</i>	Edouard Roditi	50
<i>The Spaghetti Is Lousy</i>	Giorgio Monicelli	58
THE RIGHT HONORABLE MR. DEAN	Ted Shane	64
BOILED ENGRAMS, AN ELEGY TO DIANETICS	Willard Beecher and Calder Willingham	74
MOVIES: <i>Hollywood Caterers to the Middle Class</i>	William Poster	82
REEFERS AND GLOWWORMS	Chandler Brossard	92
THE JOURNEY TO POLAND, <i>A selection from "By the Waters of the Danube"</i>	Alexandra Orme	96
BOOKS: <i>Unstable Equilibrium</i>	Chandler Brossard	111
DOWN TO EARTH: <i>The Man-Creature</i>	Alan Devoe	116
DRAUGHTS OF OLD BOURBON: <i>How to Think about Truman</i>	William Bradford Huie	121
WILLIAM BRADFORD HUIE, Editor	CHANDLER BROSSARD, Executive Editor	
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HOMOSEXUALITY IN AMERICAN CULTURE

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Homosexuality

IN AMERICAN CULTURE

**the
new
Taste
in
literature**

ALFRED TOWNE

THERE IS an old saying in show business which may be more cynical than accurate. It states that the best way for a young girl to get into the theatre is on her back. As far as I know, this procedure has never been openly suggested to young men. In the past it was generally believed that the only thing which could be gotten from young men, for a price, was their talent. This may no longer be true, for the "casting couch" has been retooled and re-upholstered in a chic Bronzini fabric to appeal to the young man who seeks his fortune in the big city. This is illustrated by the following anecdote, which actually happened last spring in New York.

The characters are the glib editor of a large publishing house, and an unsolicited young novelist. He has struggled in a cold water flat for two years to write an untidy first novel about the sweaty comradeship of the

Navy, which he has submitted hopefully. After several weeks of tense waiting, he receives a cordial, encouraging letter from the editor, expressing personal interest and suggesting cocktails. They meet.

The editor is warm, sympathetic. He details a complex, evasive program for revising the book. He would like to work closely with the writer. It would mean sacrifices, night work, perhaps . . . but why not adjourn to his apartment to continue the talk? They take a taxi.

In shirt sleeves, and armed with bourbon on the rocks, the editor expands on the subject of the editor-author relationship. They must establish a certain emotional rapport. . . . For a moment his fingertips rest lightly on the writer's thigh. It is getting late, there is so much to talk over, so why not spend the night? The writer, overwhelmed by all this attention, cannot hear the wheels clanking, and agrees. The editor sighs heavily and begins to speak of the barrenness of his own existence, due to overwork, and all kinds of other things. For one dank, silent moment, he holds the writer's hand in his, and subjects him to a penetrating glance. "But let's not talk about the book any more tonight," he says. "We'll have plenty of time for that later. Right now, I must confess, I am blinded by your anatomy!" The editor, overly hasty, gently squeezes the hand he holds. "I told you there would have to be

sacrifices. Just keep thinking of your book!"

The writer does, and wishes the editor would, too. He turns to the flushed editor and exclaims: "No, I'm sorry, *really* sorry. . . . However, about my book . . ."

The editor heaves a petulant sigh and then pointedly yawns: "I can't talk any more tonight. Perhaps you'd better go home after all. You'll hear from me."

The next morning the writer receives a note. The editor has spent the whole night tossing and turning. Upon sober reflection, he does not feel that he is the man to help with the revisions. He is sorry, *really* sorry, but he can't. His work is piling up. He has other novels (and novelists) on which to work.

THIS INCIDENT actually happened, and it is comic only because the writer proved himself so unworldly. Next time he sits down to think about his book, he will have a clearer idea of the taste to which he must appeal. It will only need a little revising, he will surely conclude. But with close collaboration from the editor, the book will be subtly rebuilt to conform with the "new taste." The shower room fellowship already present in the book will be altered until a faint odor, or at least suggestion of, talcum powder and Knize rises from every page. The prose, already verging on the emotionally lush, will become tropical,

over-ripe, with exotica of all types flitting through it. Sexually starved heroines will turn positively carnivorous. Sadism will be substituted for love. The unconscious homosexual overtones will be more self-consciously focused.

Soon his writing will cease to be a spontaneous creation. It will become a cynical production. He will finally accept the popular American idea that art, like toothpaste and contraceptives, is a commodity, and its only reason for being is to fill a demand. John O'Hara once said, in a moment of alarming frankness, that he spent a good deal of time studying up on the formula of *Harper's Bazaar* so that he could slant his stories accordingly. To be a hack is one thing, but when talented and creative writers find they have to slant their work to suit the taste of a coterie, because that coterie guards the door to the general public and to their own success and security, something sinister is happening.

So our young writer works hard and perfects a formula by which his writing becomes chic, artificial, and possibly effeminate. His book is accepted. Several chapters are placed, well in advance, with the fashionable magazines.

While the particular editors in these magazines may or may not be absolutely homosexual in their taste, they stand as arbitrators of what is fashionable in literature as well as in clothes, and the overwhelming

amount of effeminate fiction by young men which they accept for publication causes one to wonder about their editorial objectivity.

Homosexuals have for so many years dominated the "quality fiction" scene that their preferences, by osmosis, have permeated the thinking of many people connected with these magazines. The myth that these magazines offer the only outlet for unformularized, super-sensitive fiction is not borne out by a closer look. Already this "new taste" in American fiction has become as standard and inflexible as a *Saturday Evening Post* formula. Each succeeding team of editors simply picks up the ball and runs with it.

Their influence is particularly noticeable in the short story, which, in the last twenty years, has become increasingly shallow in content and elaborate in decor. Even certain female writers have been encouraged (and convinced) to write in this way. Witness Carson McCullers, Eudora Welty, and Jean Stafford, first rate talents all, who have been critically seduced.

An ironic sidelight on this problem is provided by the editor of a slick comic magazine who lives in perpetual fear that two of his fiction editors will succeed in sneaking through manuscripts of a swish nature.

The sole example of this diet proving too rich or too obvious was *Flair*. Only faintly disguised as a new kind

of fashion magazine, it was so outspokenly homosexual in its fiction, feature articles, and photographs of prominent homosexuals that it was ridiculed to death. Here was an instance, perhaps the first, where segregation was practised in reverse: the minority excluding the majority. Exclusive publication of the work of the chic elite of homosexual artists came to imply that sexual aberration (and lacking that, physical deformity e.g. the cripple, the spastic, the drug addict, the criminal, the fetichist) was a necessary part of creative activity. That the publishers may not have learned their lesson is borne out by a recent rumor that they feel the need has become so great for a magazine of *Flair's* type, that they are going to publish it twice a year, anyway, as a "trade" journal, so to speak.

WITH PUBLICATION in the slick fashion magazines, the star-making technique moves into high gear. The skillful, ruthless efficiency of this technique now rivals that of Hollywood. Rumors about the new talent are carefully organized and spread. Fashionable salon keepers, who winter in Ischia or Key West, tip off book reviewers, literary gossip columnists, other editors, other novelists. A new comet has been discovered and all telescopes are leveled his way.

The writer's reputation is solidified at a series of exclusive cocktail

parties, attended by armies of chattering youths with soft faces, lisping critics, and certain gray flannel Brooks Brothers-suited book reviewers. The writer is soon sucked into a world of Queen Bees, turkish baths (harems without girls), and taken to the right night spots. It is a world in which an elaborate network of phone calls keeping the gossip moving, whisper by whisper, does more to establish the writer's reputation than winning the Pulitzer Prize.

The critical adulation of his book proceeds right on schedule. The writer finds that, almost without an exception, the pre-publication publicity and the praiseworthy reviews are written by those same Brooks-Brothers-suited gentlemen, now disguised as Unbiased Custodians of Culture. Their delicacy surprises him, for instead of mentioning the homosexual overtones in the book, they simply call it *special, unconventional, sensitive, and probing*. Typical of this prepublication build-up is *A Long Day's Dying* by Frederick Buechner. Featured on the book jacket, in lieu of any description of the story, are blurbs by some well-known apologists of homosexuality, all of whom were too busy applauding Mr. Buechner's "promise," "perception," and "prose delicacy" to mention the homosexual content of the book. All of which adds credence to the unfounded myth that homosexuality is somehow equated with poetic, sensitive

writing and a penetrating understanding of life's problems.

Overnight the young writer becomes a personage. He soon realizes that he has not entered a world, but a universe. It is a universe without specific designation, through which many innocent outsiders wander, never comprehending its true nature.

It is the universe of the French writer, Jean Genet, whose heroes are never spoken of as homosexuals, but as "black saints," and about whom female critics write glowing appreciations (Eleanor Clark's "The World of Jean Genet," *Partisan Review*, April, 1949). It is a universe of novels about women by homosexuals (pick your own), and novels about homosexuals by women (Ethel Vance's *The Grotto*). It is a universe in which none of his friends mention that it is the content of these books which so intrigues them, but insist upon speaking only of the forms in which they are created or the techniques used. It is a universe in which the outsider, decoyed by this aesthetic smoke screen, all too often agrees with them.

Having become adjusted to this universe, the young writer at last sits down to write another novel, probably in Rome. Here he meets the whole overseas branch of the coterie, the *international trade*. This army of occupation has become so large, so uniformed, so aggressive that it makes traveling, according to

William Barrett, an absolute hazard. In "New Innocents Abroad" (*Partisan Review*, March, 1950), Mr. Barrett suggests "some future edition of Baedeker will have to deal with this new problem. . . ." To his amazement he found that a major topic of conversation, even among non-homosexual intellectuals abroad, was what they called "literature as a scandal." He quotes a leading writer as saying, "There is talk of a new conception of literature . . . in which the writer risks himself in the arena before the eyes of the crowds. He chooses to tell things that used to be passed over in silence."

As an example, a prominent literary editor sojourning in Italy last spring was asked repeatedly by Europeans if he was homosexual. They assured him that they implied nothing derogatory by the question, but they were confused by the horde of Americans who all assumed the guise and attitudes of the homosexual. They wondered if it was just a matter of style and convenience. The editor came to realize how deeply this "new taste" had permeated the thinking and manner of culturally conscious non-homosexuals. It had come to be thought of, not as "queer" taste, but simply good taste; failure to comply made one *gauche*, not "straight."

Our young writer, closeted in a villa outside of Rome, begins to write. He recalls nostalgically the

girl who had been lost somewhere between the couch in the editor's apartment and the first B & B at the Blue Angel. For a moment he suspects that on that circuitous route he had also lost himself.

But if his acceptance of his place in the coterie weakens at any time, he simply recalls the playwrights he has heard about, who could not get backing for their plays because they refused to "pole vault" with the angels; the novelists whose advertising budgets has been chopped in half, because their work, which only dealt with normal human life, was not as fashionably aware as some other book on the spring list.

The flushed face of the editor appears to him; the editor, who not only held in his hand a carefully mixed highball, but the intricate paraphernalia of printing presses, book reviews, magazine editors, best seller lists, and royalty checks as well. In fact, all the outlets by which the writer could reach that invisible phenomenon, the audience. He recalls again the whole fantastic parade of theatrical producers, art gallery directors, composers, actors, and writers that he had met, all of whom pulled equally persuasive strings, and all of whom seemed predisposed in his favor and accepted him as one of them.

THEIR PSYCHOLOGICAL MAKEUP had an enormous effect on their judgments, for homosexuals in charge

of cultural outlets are far more acutely aware of their difference than anybody else, and it makes them not only clannish, but suspicious as well. They transfer their own emotional instability to other people, and this eventually turns their taste, all too often directly connected with their sexual preferences, into an arbiter of what the audience can see, and what it cannot. They take a play (*The Green Bay Tree*), or a book (Frederick Buechner's *A Long Day's Dying*, Speed Lamkin's *Tiger in the Garden*, Donald Windham's *The Dog Star*, John Kelly's *All Souls Night*, etc., etc.), create around it an aura of importance and auspiciousness for the critics, make it available to the public, and simply wait for the inevitable chemical reaction. These books and plays do more than merely titillate the fancies of other homosexuals, long practised in unraveling symbolism and allusion; they corrupt the taste of the outsider, eager to be in on things and unsure of his ability to appreciate and understand. This machinery of success in the hands of people who by their nature cannot experience the single biggest emotion in life, not only assembles reputations like so many automobiles, it also alters values, until at the present moment the "new taste" dominates the cultural scene.

One amusing aspect of that domination is illustrated by the case of

W. H. Auden, the English poet, now living in New York. He is so fashionable that he has developed his own coterie within the coterie. His followers are so loyal that even his casual street conversations are transcribed verbatim and appear later in serious literary quarterlies.*

Our young writer might, for an instant, entertain the thought of rebellion against this huge, unspoken machinery of fame. He might indulge in the illusion that success had brought him artistic independence from those agencies that had manufactured it. But then he remembers that rebellion means more than loss of the approval of the coterie. For the standards of the coterie — no matter what the reason — have been adopted by large numbers of smart outsiders as well. His success might have been produced with brittle competence in a group of offices in midtown Manhattan, but it had been accepted as authentic and warranted by thousands of people who did not know him and had never been near these offices.

In his moment of indecision, he might succumb to the relief of deciding that there was no use giving people what they do not want. This sedative thought had, after all, satis-

fied consciences far more vigilant than his.

Perhaps he will finish his book and rush off to Hollywood to forget. If he is lucky, and thick-skinned, this will happen without a hitch. If not, he can always assuage his anguish with a seven-year contract, obtained through the west coast branch of the coterie.

The rewards for cooperation are gaudy, delicious, but what he would one day learn, however, is that the price of it is a gradual atrophy of his talent, and a subtle traduction of critical values.

If, sitting in Hollywood forlornly counting his bank balance, he comprehends this, he will discover that it is something that no number of extra dry martinis can blot out, and no complacent logic justify. But at least our young man has his bank balance, contributed to by an audience of thousands, innocently trying to buy their way into his universe because they are convinced it is the smart thing to do. For them the "new taste" represents sophistication and style, not abnormality.

Beneath the style lie the values of a powerful coterie, values which are implicit in the style itself. Their widespread acceptance can only lead to a gradual corruption of all aspects of American culture.

* *Accent*, Autumn, 1949. *Hudson Review*, Winter, 1951.



***In the
Mercury's
Opinion***

A State of Chassis

AN IDEA that seems to be in the air these days, and has been for some time now, is that American society is morally bankrupt, that the old standards are no longer respected by the people of this country, that there is no longer any "common set of values" and nothing to "believe in." This idea has gained considerable currency, especially among intellectuals, in the years since the war, and seems to have been swallowed whole by a large group of our younger writers who, in a sort of romantic despair, have translated it into novels and stories and plays of negation and perversity. Those who hold with this idea — it is more properly a set of interrelated ideas — point to corruption and rot on every social level from that of the irresponsible rich ("Have your latchkey gold-plated at Cartier's") to that of the

This month's editorial was written by Albert Hubbell, who is a frequent contributor to THE MERCURY.

'teen-agers of our city poor ("Four Youths Held In Fatal Beating Of Aged Woman"). It is said to be manifest in political life, in business, in such institutions as marriage and the home, which supposedly have been all but destroyed. And that is not all, say the weary Jeremiahs; the level of our culture has sunk low, and the country has become a vast spiritual desert in which the arts wither and die, or are so cheapened and debased by vulgarity and commercialism that they cease to be arts at all. There is also no longer a generally accepted code of ethical conduct to guide the youth, who may soon be asked to fight to save a civilization in which they have no faith. The good, the true and the beautiful have ceased to be the criterions of a healthy people — the good is relative, the true is a matter of dialectics, and the beautiful can be manufactured in Hollywood at so many dollars per square inch of skin. So it would seem that, at last, Americans must take literally the final words of the General Confession in the Book of Common Prayer — "and there is no health in us."

We wonder. And without any intent to write a polemic in defense of American society, we should like to make a few random observations on this despondent philosophy. First, it seems to us that a great deal of it is not true and that much of it is an unconscious parroting of stand-

ard Communist propaganda, which always tries to soften up a society by undermining that society's belief in the things it holds dear; for, if you can convince people, especially the young, that their moral and spiritual values no longer exist, they will not fight to preserve them.

Second, America is a cultural democracy as well as a political and economic one, or as close to it as any community of people has ever come, and in a civilization where everyone, or nearly everyone, can read and has the means to buy books and magazines, attend the movies and the theatre, buy sheet music and records and put nickels in the juke boxes, it is hardly surprising that a large amount of vulgarity should be in constant circulation or that the *level* of culture should appear to be low. But the culture of a civilization is measured at the top; culture is not a matter of levels. In other nations and societies — the France of the eighteenth century, for instance, or the Italy of the Renaissance — attainments in the arts and sciences and in things of the spirit were assayed qualitatively. In those societies, only a leisured elite was educated enough to be receptive to cultural things, and a good 90 per cent of the population was left out of the accounting because they took no part in the intellectual life of the nation. If, however, that 90 per cent of the French people had had the requisite means and

education to be able to partake in that life, eighteenth century French culture would present a very different aspect. The French have always held American culture in more or less good-humored contempt; if, however, you would care to see the other side of the medal, take a tour of the suburbs of Paris where the "little" man, the *petit bourgeois*, has had a chance, in the slow expanding of French democracy, to express himself in matters of architecture, landscaping and interior decoration. After such a tour no one could ever again talk about the "instinctive good taste" of the French people. The great cultures of the history of western civilization have been aristocratic; ours, perforce, must be democratic, and there is no particular reason to measure it by its lowest common denominators. Certainly, the *majority* of the people, if it is noses that are being counted, prefer comic books, and have a predilection for the more inane products of Hollywood and of the entrepreneurs of the radio and television. But a quite considerable minority appreciate what is good and patronize it, else how would all the sad young men know the good from the bad?

THE CHARGE that there is no longer a common set of values by which the Americans measure social and moral behavior can also stand a bit of re-examination. It is

true that if one confines himself to the front pages of the American newspaper, especially the tabloids, which specialize in stories of crime, delinquency and sexual aberration, he will get an impression of social chaos and moral decay. But if our society were as sick as it is supposed to be, these things would not cause public resentment and anger nor would steps be taken to cure the ills. It was significant that, during the mild mass insanity over the Kefauver Committee's show on television, it was the voice of Senator Tobey, raised in simple, old-fashioned indignation over the iniquities that came to light, which struck the most responsive chord in the audience. Senator Tobey's protests were Biblical in character — "Why, that is a sin, beyond peradventure!" he would burst out, or "This wickedness should be punished, for it reeks in the sight of the Lord!" The significance of these almost primitive reactions to moral obloquy, which would not have been out of place in a nineteenth century sermon, was that they were not cynically laughed off by the audience; the audience reacted, largely, the way Senator Tobey did, and his judgments on iniquity were precisely in their frame of reference. Imagine how such sentiments, publicly expressed, would have been greeted by an audience in, say, the Berlin of the nineteen twenties, when a society *was* crumbling, and

all moral values *had been* set upside down?

It would seem that we still abide by the standards of virtue of our grandfathers and grandmothers, whether we like it or not. Marriage as an institution may be on the rocks, but it is still the goal of most American girls; the home may be breaking up, but nearly every young man wants one of his own. Not one of the Ten Commandments has been repealed and, currently, many ex-members of the Communist Party have been beating their breasts in public for having breached the First. The revelations of the somewhat dubious Kinsey Report were received with understandable curiosity, and with a certain amount of understandable levity, by the American people. But it is overlooked by those who view that report with alarm that the behavior described in it was not claimed as behavior peculiar to the contemporary American male. No such survey had ever before been made, anywhere. It would seem, then, that it was more a report on the nature of the beast, *homo sapiens*, than an accounting of moral decay in our society. A Kinsey report on the sexual conduct of the Greek male in the Golden Age of Pericles would have, doubtless, made just as rich reading and, very probably, richer.

PERHAPS THE self criticism to which the more thoughtful young people of the country has been subjecting our society is a healthy sign that we are gradually growing up. Healthy, that is, if kept this side of defeatism. The world *is* in "a state of chassis," as the Paycock used to say and, in times that try men's souls, it is good to examine the things men live by. In his "The Revolt Of The Masses," the Spanish philosopher, Ortega y Gasset, remarked on the decline in this century of the starry-eyed faith in inevitable progress, and the ascendancy of doubt about the inevitability of anything. "Today," he wrote, "by the very fact that everything seems possible to us, we have a feeling that the worst of all is possible: retrogression, barbarism, decadence. This [is not] a bad symptom; it would mean that we are once again forming contact with that insecurity which is essential to all forms of life, that anxiety, both dolorous and delicious, contained in every moment, if we know how to live it to its innermost core, right down to its palpitating vitals." It may be that if men can come to terms with the fact that the good is not inevitable, they will devise measures to bring it about by their own efforts. The realization that we are insecure is a sad awakening, but it *is* an awakening.

Gravediggers of America

Part Two

How Stalin's Disciples Review Books

RALPH DE TOLEDANO

EVER SINCE THE fellow-traveling hordes moved in on America's intellectual life, the battle of the books has been going on. Righteous as Elmer Gantry, the Communists, pinkos, dupes, and weak-wilburs came to dinner in the early Thirties, bringing with them knives, brass knuckles, and stink bombs. These they used on the writers, thinkers, and reporters who had the nerve to point out that Stalin's new clothes were neither new nor even clothes.

The literary fellow-travelers have been routed from the dinner table, but they are still barricaded in the pantry. So a study of their methods, their words, and the extent of their penetration into America's thought channels is considerably more than academic. If only as a study in the calculated smear, the past should be examined.

As demonstrated in my last month's sermon, the pro-Chinese Communist cabal's hold on book writing and book reviewing was

virtually total and totalitarian. An anti-Communist could barely get his elbows on the table before the chair was pulled out from under him. In all fairness to the *Saturday Review of Literature*, *The New York Times Book Section*, and the *New York Herald Tribune Book Review*, the communizers in the domestic and European field never equaled this hold.

In all fairness, too, it must be noted that these vestiges of impartiality were not entirely premeditated. For one thing, history kept running against the Soviet mythologists. For another, more people had gone to Russia; more people could see the local American Reds in action. Ergo, more thumbs and forefingers held to the nose. Nevertheless, the trend in the left direction was marked.

On the *Herald Tribune*, the cause of the infection can be traced to Joseph Barnes, for many years foreign editor of that paper, a power in its councils, a ubiquitous reviewer who flavored his praiseful paeans of all books pro-Soviet with a sprinkling of criticism so skillfully used that it added to the overall zest. What Barnes' political views are remains a moot question. On the record, he has never to this writer's knowledge said an unkind word about the Soviet Union. And when the newspaper *PM* collapsed, the editor of its successor, *The Star*, a tabloid of permanent blush, was

Joseph Barnes.

Today, Barnes is executive editor of Simon & Schuster, a publishing house which knows not red-baiting. And, by the sheerest of happenstance, one of the first political books to be announced by S & S since the advent of Barnes was a "neutral" study of the same Chinese Communists who are gamboling with American boys in Korea. All this, however damning, may be but a series of coincidences. The Marxists, historical determinists all, do not believe in coincidence — but I am willing to give Barnes the benefit of the doubt.

OVER THE YEARS, the Barnes byline has appeared with regularity in the *Herald Tribune's* weekly book section. Whenever books on Russia have been reviewed, the chore has usually gone to him or to someone as reliably pro-Soviet. Only during the period of the Hitler-Stalin pact was it varied. For the record, here are some examples:

Mission To Moscow, by Joseph E. Davies: "As a lawyer, he was impressed by the evidence of guilt [in the Moscow purge trials]. . . . Finally, he found [the Soviet regime] sharply different from fascism, not only in its stake in peace, but also in its attitude toward the central problem of *combining freedom with security* for large masses of people all over the world." — Joseph Barnes (emphasis mine).

U.S.S.R.: The Story of Soviet Russia, by Walter Duranty (who once confessed that he "tried to think like a true-blue Stalinist . . . and had succeeded too well"): "His explanation of the Soviet-Nazi pact is refreshingly clear of the venom which crowded the minds of many westerners while the pact was still in force. . . . The link between the Nazis and the [Moscow] trials is the one great clew to what was otherwise mystery." — Barnes.

The Pattern of Soviet Power, by Edgar Snow: After reassuring the reader that Snow's views were a long way from pro-Communist, the reviewer seconded the writer's pious hope for "the rise of leftist (not Communist) political parties, and a Soviet, rather than an Anglo-Saxon, definition of civil liberties" in postwar Eastern Europe. — Barnes.

Soviet Politics At Home And Abroad, by Frederick L. Schuman (listed by the House Un-American Activities Committee as having been affiliated with from twenty-one to thirty Red fronts): Schuman is "one of the appallingly few American scholars . . . equipped to work on Russian materials. . . . [His book] is encyclopedic." — Barnes.

Other disciples carried on the work when Barnes was otherwise occupied:

Shooting The Russian War, by the pro-Communist photographer Margaret Bourke-White: "With the

sole exception of Ambassador Davies' book, I know of no other account which is so patently veracious or so free from preconceived prejudices or partialities." — Iris Barry.

These Are The Russians, by the crypto-Communist Richard Lauterbach: "An honest report, written without rancor or preconceived notions." — Leland Stowe. (When William L. White's *Report on the Russians*, direct reporting on what he had seen and heard, was published, Foster Rhea Dulles attacked it as "prejudiced," simply because it was critical of the Soviet system. In the reviewer's lexicon "pro-Soviet" was always translated into "impartial," and "anti-Soviet" became "prejudiced.")

One Who Survived, by Alexander Barmine (one-time general in the Red Army who broke with Stalin during the purges): "Reflects a deep prejudice. . . . There is no documentation to sustain the underlying assumption of . . . the growing degradation of the Russian people under Stalinism. . . . Hopes to convince . . . by endlessly repeating that the Soviet Union is . . . a totalitarian tyranny." — Foster Rhea Dulles.

I Chose Freedom, by Victor Kravchenko: "A diatribe written by a . . . disillusioned man who is incapable of thoughtful reflection." — Walter Kerr.

Soviet Asia Mission, by Henry Wallace: "A heartening expression

of faith in the Soviet Union." — Foster Rhea Dulles.

This picture of pro-Soviet joys was not unrelieved. Books like Eugene Lyons's *Assignment in Utopia*, Max Eastman's *Stalin's Russia*, and Gen. Walter Krivitsky's *In Stalin's Secret Service* — all revealing the ills of Russia — were favorably reviewed in the *Herald Tribune*. Other such books had their day, but these days tended to be few and far between.

On *The New York Times* the story was far less consistent. Until the long honeymoon with Stalin, its book pages were kept relatively clear of the party line. But after the war, perhaps because the infiltration of ideas and personnel had been too great, there was a consistent lag. Today, although its ideological schizophrenia has taken another direction, *The New York Times Book Section* shows signs of recovery. Some samples of the taint:

Stalin & Co., by Walter Duranty: "Will not feed the passions underlying much of the current comment on Russian policy. . . . Informative." — Raymond Swing. (This book was a defense of the liquidation of the Kulaks, of the Soviet invasion of Finland, and of the Nazi-Soviet pact.)

Behind The Iron Curtain, by George Moorad: Not reviewed in *The Times* — a very critical account of life in Russia.

Guide To The Soviet Union, by

the strongly pro-Soviet William Mandel: "A valuable compendium." — Richard Lauterbach (previously described).

Soviet Politics At Home And Abroad, by the already-characterized Prof. Schuman: "Highly interesting and even exciting reading. . . . Breadth of perspective." — Michael Karpovich, whose views before the war had been sound.

Men without Faces, by Louis Budenz: "Like many other ex-Communists, Mr. Budenz tends to see Communists under every bush and to make sweeping charges." — R. L. Duffus. (The standard critical gambit used to dismiss books by ex-Communists who say uncomfortable things.)

The Whole of Their Lives, by Benjamin Gitlow (one-time head of the American Communist Party): "Expects us to take a great deal . . . on faith." (Another gambit.) — Granville Hicks.

THE ONE WORD to describe the *Saturday Review's* slant is "weird." In the past, anti-Communists like Bertrand Russell, I. D. W. Talmadge, Eugene Lyons, and even Alexander Kerensky appeared in its columns. But where pro-Red books had no trouble getting pro-Red reviews, the SRL was so terrified at Louis Fischer's approving review of the much-maligned *Report on the Russians* that it called in a group of other "experts" to attack or concur.

It lost courage again over David Martin's *Ally Betrayed*, a meticulously documented book on Draja Mikhailovich, the Chetnik leader sold out to Tito by Roosevelt and Churchill. Two reviews, pro and con, ran side by side. One of its favorite reviewers on Russia was Maurice Hindus. Exhibits:

Soviet Asia Mission, by Henry Wallace: "Most of the book, and by far the most exciting part, is devoted to Siberia, which Wallace rightly terms 'Russia's Wild West.' . . . High up north is Magadan; started in 1933, it now teems with a population of 40,000." This is as grimly horrible a sentiment as if someone were to write: "Just bare fields in 1932, Buchenwald was teeming with life within a few years." Magadan was one of the larger Soviet slave-labor camps, a well-known fact which Wallace's traveling companion, Owen Lattimore, neglected to tell him.

The *Saturday Review* remains a strange combination. The bylines of pinkos like Robert Payne still appear. As late as November, 1950, it could publish a review by John Hazard of Harold J. Berman's *Justice In Russia* which advanced as a "dangerous half-truth" the "popular view of the Soviet state 'as a police state.' . . . Berman finds that . . . strict legality has developed."

Nevertheless, the SRL's editors are firmly convinced that they are anti-Communist — or at least non-

Communist. But like Americans for Democratic Action, whose political thinking they most closely reflect, the SRL's editors also often have difficulty in determining just what a Communist is.

THOUGH the myth of Kremlin holiness is, even on Park Avenue, somewhat suspect today, it has been replaced by an equally pernicious set of false values. These are the stock-in-trade of our latter-day hysterics, and they crop up repeatedly in the SRL, the *Herald Tribune*, and *The Times* book sections. To read these journals, the unwary reader would believe that the United States was panicking toward fascism, that civil liberties were moribund, and that fighting Communism with any vigor ultimately destroyed democracy.

This Happened In Pasadena, David Hulburd's civil rights dime dreadful, was accepted by reviewers on these publications as gospel truth — a revelation which needed no checking against the facts. Just the mention of one tinhorn fascist, who tried to muscle in on the Pasadena case and was sent hustling almost immediately by the irate citizens involved in the public education battle, was enough to send the "liberal" reviewers all aflame to their typewriters to battle a non-existent menace created by skillful propaganda.

Again, Cabell Phillips, the Sunday *Times* Washington correspondent,

fell all over himself to make a case for Max Lowenthal's *The Federal Bureau of Investigation* (a shabby book packing between covers every unsubstantiated charge and false rumor against the FBI and juggling them in an attempt to discredit J. Edgar Hoover). "No thoughtful person . . . will dispute the argument that the FBI is the most proficient police force in the world," Phillips wrote. But to him, Lowenthal's book is "thoughtful and important . . . because of the immense research and careful documentation."

Reviewing *The Loyalty of Free Men* in *The Times*, Phillips never informed the reader that Alan Barth, the author, was a prodigious propagandist for the innocence of the convicted Communist perjurer William Remington — and that this propaganda consisted mostly in smearing those who gave their loyalty to Elizabeth Bentley rather than to Remington. Nor did Phillips ever note Barth's almost pathological hatred of those ex-Communists who step forward to disclose the nature of the Communist conspiracy.

Instead, he accepted Barth's thesis that the Communist Party is no danger to the government — a view which fortunately the Supreme Court does not share. Communist subversion, Phillips warned, cannot be fought "without attacking political and intellectual freedom." And, he added, Barth's attacks on con-

gressional committees, the "cold war treason trials" of Hiss and Remington, and the loyalty and security program, were "thoughtful" and "documented."

In Henry F. Pringle's review of the same book for the *Herald Tribune*, the mixture was as before — that the sole Communist threat is one of dissenting political opinions.

ALISTAIR COOKE, discussing Carey McWilliams' *Witch Hunt* in *The Times*, described the author as a "sincere patriot." Yet Cooke, a well-informed reporter, neglected to point out that McWilliams' scream against the alleged "revival of heresy" might perhaps have been conditioned by his membership in some fifty Communist-front groups (by official record) and, by testimony under oath in the Communist Party.

Cooke at least disputed some of McWilliams' ideas. But Vern Countryman, in the *Herald Tribune*, swallowed them all. With unconscious irony, he wrote that "Mr. McWilliams understands the theory and the technique of heresy hunting as few do today." Communists, to those government fascists, "frequently means . . . that they cannot prove they are not 'Communists.'" And "it is abundantly clear that many of those who claim to be protecting our national security are not looking for spies or saboteurs," he added. They are merely out to persecute non-conformists.

It is hard to understand the critical value of Ernest J. Simmons, who some years back joined Schuman, McWilliams, Max Lerner & Co. in attacking John Dewey, Irwin Edman and other writers and philosophers as "fascists and allies of fascists" because they had signed a statement calling the Soviet Union "totalitarian." Yet Simmons is entrusted with the responsibility of reviewing Juri Jelagin's anti-Soviet *Taming of The Arts*. Brooks Atkinson, in *The Times*, extracted from this work the whole horrible story of police subjugation of the arts in Russia. Simmons used his review space to point out how, despite some police control, "artists are described . . . as pampered favorites of the state. . . . The arts have flourished in the Soviet Union" and actresses own many fur coats. Only since 1946 has the government really interfered, he noted, and Stalin has very good taste. As for Meyerhold, liquidated in the early 1930's for refusing to knuckle down to artistic dictation, Simmons merely glossed over this unpleasant phase by mentioning the great director's "mysterious later years."

This is the pattern to which so

much reviewing is being cut today. Most of the Communists and fellow travelers are "non-Communists" today, but their hate of the old enemy — the premature anti-Communist — persists. They are a little more circumspect now.

And the same Leninist belief that only one philosophy is valid persists. Let those who do not share their brand of "liberalism", their New/Fair Dealism, beware. Though the Reds are slowly losing the battle of the books, in a slow war of attrition, their blood-cousins remain in power. The "conservative" *Times* and *Herald Tribune* still invite them to dinner and remain hostile to literary conservatism. And the *Saturday Review*, dedicated to the obsolescence of modern man, continues to struggle for a liberal faith which its neo-Fabian ideology negates.

Nevertheless, let us rejoice. Once upon a time, Kyle Crichton reviewed *Redder Than The Rose* most favorably for the old *Life* magazine. The author of the book was "Robert Forsythe" — Crichton's nom-de-New-Masses. When the fraud was discovered, there were chuckles. Now, times have changed for the better. Fewer people would chuckle.

Ralph de Toledano, co-author of the book, Seeds of Treason, wrote "The Book Reviewers Sell Out China" in our July issue. Reprints of both articles are available.

Withered on the Vine

a story

ARMAND KASHMANIAN

THE PRISON GRAPEVINE doesn't know why it warns everyone to distrust the psycho. But I do. His reports are read by laymen later. They form opinions warped by ponderous psychiatric terminology. Moreover, the psychoanalyst is one of the high-priests of the universal cult which splinters the trillion-celled unity of man into presumptuous goods and bads. And the discovery — especially and principally the legal discovery, as distinguished from moral and ethical — is sufficient excuse not only to disregard whatever is or has been good, but also to dig up more that is bad. And if one looks hard enough for anything in particular, the imagination is inclined to assist whatever the eye and ear are desirous to record. One more aspect of cultivated ignorance fobbed off as science is the fact that personality splinters

obtained from countless men are lumped together for the statistical modes, norms, and whatnots by which the mass is used to judge the individual.

While all that is as simple as it is obvious, it does not provoke any of the fearful caution which distrust creates. Let the analyst write his report after interviewing me, and let them further misinterpret however they be inclined. I have no interest in trying to affect a report that will not injure my chances of parole. The possibility of parole is possibility only. As such it is uncertainty.

I have served five months of my three-year sentence for shop-lifting. That is a certainty. At the expiration of the remainder of my sentence, two years, seven months and five days, they must give me my freedom. Only insanity could pre-

vent my going free. I am not insane. Of that too am I certain, as certain as my heartbeat, or as certain as the guard motioning me to enter this door with the frosted glass panel.

I turn the brass knob and walk in, shutting it behind me.

"Come in, please, come in," he points his fancy, unlighted pipe at the straight-backed chair in front of his green, metal desk, "I'm Dr. Friedlin, and you are —"

Interrupting him, I pointed out that, since we both knew who we were, we could dispense with the preamble.

Neither my bluntness nor my passing up his choice of seating appear to have irritated him. He does a "Hmmm" through red-puckered lips as I take the comfortable leather chair at the lower end of his desk. He inquires after my health and whether I think I'm being treated well. Patiently I tell him yes — wondering what his angle is. According to the grapevine, his desk is always cluttered up with puzzles and trick blocks. I see nothing on his desk except a folder, doubtless mine. Now he asks me how much I like being in prison. I ask him sharply if he'd like to exchange places.

"Obviously you are an outspoken inmate."

The usage of names, I said, was hypocritical. In private I'm an inmate, in public a convict. When I asked him whether convict is supposed to indicate or connote sub-

human, he looks me in the eye, then turns away.

He's short, plump, and round of face, with smooth, pinkish skin, like a baby's. Soft. Thick dark brown hair looks soft too. Even his voice is soft. An urban paunch bulges modestly through his light gray tweed jacket. His pale blue eyes have a curious waxy luster. Doubtless this cultured barbarian imagines me to be as simple an organism as an amoeba.

"Apparently you disapprove of me. Why?"

He should visit his eye doctor. Since I have made small effort to camouflage my feelings, disapproval is understatement. To mention that seems pointless. Therefore I remarked that, although we had never before met, he was going to presume to know me well enough within this brief interview to stick psychiatric labels on me, and that such presumption is ridiculous.

SURFACING FROM the folder through which he has been idly swimming, he looks at me with faint amusement: "You're not at all a stranger to me."

Before he had a chance to blunder further down idiot lane, I reminded him that that folder is a compilation of my past, which is dead. If nothing else, as a biological animal, I live and change each minute of each day. I cannot be known or understood — in the correct senses of the words —

by probing the graves of all my yesterdays, as if it were possible to make just half my yesterdays accessible. Even if they were, I said that that would still be like trying to wrap a corpse around my living neck.

"You are an unusually intelligent man."

Brushing aside the subversive compliment, I said that I knew I had failed, first in life and then in crime. Failures are not intelligent.

"Why?"

At that moment my eye is attracted up to the narrow barred window behind him. It is the only window in the neat, spare and featureless office. The sun peeps through a crack in the steel-gray overcast. It is just like the dawn that fights to enter my cell each day — only to get stretched out on the bare stone floor, its pallid face branded by cold steel bars.

"Matt!" he said, "would you care for a cigarette?"

I'm looking down at his soft white hand extending a package of cigarettes. I wouldn't refuse a tailor-made from the devil himself. My first delicious drag instantly loses its zestfulness. I glance up to see the elements weld the crack in the sky. Again I feel that old, sickening weariness. Only this time I'm not going to betray my feelings. I look squarely at him, wishing I were a tachina fly. All my larvae I'd lay on his fat white belly.

"Your remark about failing at

life and crime is interesting. That is a novel viewpoint, believe me, only —" he sits back in his cushiony easy chair, holds his cigarette upright in his fist like a school teacher shaking a blackboard pointer, "it lacks one important detail. Why? Why did you fail? That's where science comes in, to answer that why. To help you."

Could it be? He sounded sincere for a change. No. He plays on the other team. But, having failed to thank him for the tailor-made, I repaid his token kindness by assuming he was able to answer the unanswerable, and said that I saw no sense in calling the fire department

Armand Kashmanian, author of this unusually sensitive story of prison life, is serving a ten- to fifteen-year sentence in a state penitentiary. He does not want to hide behind a penname: "The fact that I'm a prisoner, besides giving the story an authentic background, adds color — both the gray of prison and the red of a semi-literate human being."

Since the age of ten, the author has been serving out a succession of reform school, and jail terms, except for a period in the Army. He began writing as a paratrooper during World War II, while in the hospital in Naples. Although the serious creative writing he has produced in prison has attracted much favorable comment from numerous editors and writers, this is his first published story.

after the house had burnt to ashes. Immediately regretting that metaphor, I quickly added that the task was obstructed by the fact that they hurl us wretches into hate-encrusted caves where ceaseless torment and protean evil are; by virtue of some fantastic truism, supposed to cleanse the cesspools of our minds. So why seek answers when the deadly, stagnating years in a corrosive environment are only going to foster other cesspools for future failures?

"You make it seem so hopeless. But, Matt —"

There, I interrupted the apologist, are no buts to conceal or to qualify the facts surrounding me. Rather than get caught up in pointless argument, I reminded him that I was here to be interviewed — and not to be led into discussions intended to blind me to irrevocable fact.

"You know, Matt, I'd like to be your friend — if you'd just let me."

It is difficult to control myself. I feel like spitting in his kisser. Those are the exact same words the police chief used right after kicking in my ribs, and then kicking some more because I continued to doubt his friendly intentions. And he wants me to believe he's here to help me. Ha! I see the psycho's angle. He's here to bury me. This isn't a routine interview. It can't be. I've done everything except call him a fat sonofabitch, and still he gives me the pal-act. I know why he hasn't thrown me out of his office, the way

he throws out all those who don't play ball with him. Porky is trying to seduce me into letting him stick his hooks into the graveyard of my past, hoping I'll let something slip that will positively link me with what happened that night. That's what everybody's hoping, and I'm getting sick and tired of all this sneaky persecution.

They lay traps, spy on me — and, Lord, haven't I been punished enough? Christ, if I only knew how they found out, I might then understand why, like Porky here, no one has so much as hinted about that night. For with understanding I would then have the certainty with which to give successful battle to life and all these, my enemies. Doubt is like a fifth columnist. It cripples and confuses, and — cripples? Of course! Keeping me in doubt must be intended to prey on my mind until I either confess or go mad.

I CAN FEEL Porky giving me careful scrutiny, so I look up from my lap. I'm not going to try to stare him down, for I've just conceived a plan through which I can end this farce of an interview, and make certain it's the last. So I look away and stick respect in my voice: "How am I supposed to let you be my friend?"

"You can begin by trusting me."

"In other words, you want me to talk about my past. Do you really think you can discover why I failed in life?"

"It is possible, Matt — if you give me your complete confidence."

I'll give it to him, all right: doctored excerpts. When he eventually realizes I'm weaving a phony tapestry that blames bad company for my being what I am — well, it'll be interesting to see his reactions. I'll show him. This should be simple. I have the brains and the will power. All I have to do is stick to the point by describing characters. That shouldn't be difficult. I'm not at all afraid to resurrect my past. Certainly I can control my thoughts. I'm not trying to convince myself of anything. Why should I? I've already told myself I have no doubts, so that's that. There's nothing to worry about.

"Well, Matt? Are you afraid to trust me?"

I shake my head vigorously, then pick up the thread at the most logical beginning:

"Once upon a time Sol's Candy Store was the hangout for a group of elderly men who impressed me and my pals with being what they claimed to be: retired bigshots of crime." I look at him inquiringly, he nods his head, so I know I've sucked him in for the big let-down. "The Candy Store was just around the corner from where I lived with my folks over on Third Avenue. Dick, my big brother, he's twenty-one or so, Dick used to say they were penny ante chiselers who were too old and too beaten by life to

steal even pennies. But I never bothered my head about whether they embellished their yarns as a splayed streetwalker cakes on powder, paint, and grease. I don't think anyone else in the gang did, for that matter. Can't be certain, of course. For myself, I guess you might say I was pleasantly fascinated by the outrageously criminal anecdotes dispensed by mugs like Fat-the-Butch. He's the oldest, about forty-one.

"Everybody at the store said Fat knew all the angles. None could speak so contemptuously of all things sacred, legal, and respectable. Along with knowing all there was to know, he also had an explanation for anything that knocked the boys 'still in the business,' as he put it.

"'Them wise guy magazines and newspapers lie like hell about the boys. Alla time them highbrow punks try ta intentionally make them look like lamebrain pansies, skunks, and stuff-heels. Know why? Well, lemme tell ya.' Fat paused, rubbed the flaccid dewlaps hanging around his alleged neck like layers of grayish dough, then went on. 'They aint got the moxie to do the really rough-tough stuff the boys do to make a fast buck. Instead, the highbrows cover up for the pols and slue-foot blue-bloods and white collar dudes who diddle the law and public the sneaky legal way.'

"Yeah — old Fat was quite a character. You know, I don't think a day ever passed without one of

them giving at least a quick mention to having done time in some of the toughest cans in the country. I guess that was their funny way of suggesting they had done business with Al Capone, Lucky, and guys like that.

"Most of the gang couldn't brag about so much as a two-bit haul, never mind a big job. Which, incidentally, was the only kind of crimes they ever talked about having pulled. In a matter of fact sort of way, five and ten thousand dollar scores would be the chicken feed of a so-so take. Extemporaneously — they threw thousand dollar bills around with such impressive indifference that, I reasoned, only those accustomed to handling huge sums could mention owning a thousand dollar bill as if it was an insignificant buck. Curiously enough, I even felt it some kind of honor to have the bite-put-on-me by former big wheels. They would borrow quarters with such casualness that my adventurized illusion would not tolerate even the hint of a thought that I might be giving handouts to bums. That's beside the point, though.

"I didn't get the idea all of a sudden. At least I don't think so. It crept into my mind like a kid sneaking into the movies through the balcony exits and then easing down into the orchestra seats. I enjoyed mulling over the idea of pulling a one-man stick-up. And then — I began to prime the idea with Big — the Biggest Crap game in town.

"Old Slick was the one who used his connections to get me in to visit the high class Frolic Club to see some fast action, explaining that 'fast action' meant that a man could lay practically any large sum on the table and have his bet covered instantly. Although Slick modestly apologized for not having any loose change to gamble with, he was on first name terms with sharply dressed guys who flashed bankrolls that would have made bank presidents green.

"Strangely enough, despite the talk of how closely guarded big-time crap games were, I didn't see so much as a slingshot around the club. Another curious thing was that I didn't see any of the flat-nosed and cauliflower-eared gunsels I had imagined would be either acting as bodyguards or shooting crap. They looked like ordinary people with extraordinary bank rolls. Like successful businessmen.

"It should be simple to walk in there and hold them up. I had twenty bucks saved. Just enough to buy a rod. To pull that job should be a snap. Just line them up against the wall and then scoop up all those nice green bills stacked so nice and neat. Money is the most beautiful sight in the world. With all that dough I can have the time of my life.

"First I'd have to case the job. Turning off Broadway, I walked midway down the block to an alley. Near the other end, which exits

on the further street, is the side entrance to the Frolic Club. After glancing up and down the less populated side street, I plunged into that dark maw. Almost immediately the bounce fled from my legs. I stopped. Scanned the ground, the brick walls. My lips tight shut and eyes wide open. Tilting back my head, I stared for hour-long seconds. I couldn't see the star-studded sky that should be there. Just an implacable blackness, as if a blackened steel ceiling has been flung across the tops of the tall buildings. Worse still is the awful silence. All the familiar street sounds — the buzz and chatter of a host of human voices, the scuffle, tramp, and scrape of countless shoes, and the snarling, hooting cacophony of a multitude of impatient cars and trucks — the symphony of the city street no longer exists. Suddenly I heard the weird scuffle of feet. It came from the recessed shaftway just ahead. I walked up and peeked in. The sight disemboweled my adventurized delusion. A cowardly robber was beating up an elderly, white-haired drunk. Yes sir, the robber was a coward and a louse."

Maybe I did plan my story this way, subconsciously, I don't know, but I'm glad it jumped the rail. I've talked it into life. It is so fascinatingly unreal that its very unreality gives a greater reality than the chair in which I'm sitting. Once again it's blotting the moisture in my throat and lapping out patches of sweat all over me. I'm glad.

I like its rasp-like tongue. The last time the Silence was the victor. I'll call the turn this time. Of that I'm certain, for I've succeeded in concealing my identity. I'll bet I can even choke the life out of it by keeping my mouth shut. In fact, I know.

"It was pitiful to know that howling hounds of shame and conscience still existed in his thievish being. It was also hateful. Believe me, doc, it was. A million thoughts flashed through my mind. Then, like shiny bits of quicksilver rapidly brought together into one coherent puddle, a floodtide of street fights gathered into a mirror of realization. I know why the experience was revolting. Subconsciously I had always expected and delivered fair blows and foul, which were all the result of the intemperate and oftentimes cruel passion of youth fighting to escape anonymity. The fertile dreams of youth are heroic and grandiose. That's what they are all right. They spark the fierce impulses to wrest from disappointed, sterile, and senile age the recognition of his right to select his own destiny. That is clean. But this sickening spectacle is as unclean as the sewer in which it's been conceived. But who caused that sewer? How many polluted life streams went into the making of that mind? Isn't the mind of a baby born clean and innocent? Isn't every child a Garden of Eden incarnate? Huh? And what of this particular youth's brutal attack? Huh? Wasn't

he using the simplified tactics of all to wrest the adoration of his elders? The measurement of worth and success? Do you know, doctor? Tell me, please. Answer! Please answer me. Goddamn it! say something, do something. Just shut me up. Please, it's happening again. Christ almighty don't just sit there, pale and sweating. . . .

THERE WE WERE, fighting for hours, it seemed. Finally I succeeded in locking his head under my arm. With the deadly regularity of a pendulum, I kept pumping my fist into his face. There was a rhythm in my arm, and it's like the beating of my heart. He whimpers miserably. He stops trying to protect his face with one hand while the other prevents me from shutting off his windpipe. His hot, stinking breath is panting across the back of my hand. He will not beg for mercy. With his arms dangled as awkwardly as his body is bent, there is nothing to prevent me from fixing his windpipe with my forearm. I give an experimental jerk. Then tighten severely. He gasps and chokes. I let up. Nothing but that reeking breath. I curse and hook my fist into his face, putting all my weight behind it. Lips, teeth, and nose smear my fist. He isn't beaten. Nor has he merely quit. I heaved the corpse out into the alley proper.

"Feeling a sudden need to relieve myself, I turned and stepped over to

a corner in the shaftway. I felt no better. I pulled out my flashlight. It still worked. Its beam revealed the partly filled bottle of whiskey. Beside it was the drunk's dollar bill. Brimful of despair, I pocketed the loot, then gurgled it dry. As I left the alley, the symphony of the street destroyed the silence. Cars grumbled by.

"I could hear people talking about the Korean war. Funny to think of the war now and of my brother Dick getting drafted for it. If he'd been around things might've been different. Too late to —"

"Forgive me for interrupting you, Matt. Let's not go any further. You see, it's very, very important to arrange the element of time in proper order. Surely you were born in 1880 as your folder here states? That's the correct date, isn't it?"

No sense trying to answer him. He's trying so desperately to deny the evidence of his own senses. That's human nature, I guess. I acted the same way that first time. He got no kicks coming. He'll live a couple a years more anyway. I can feel my bones getting stiff. So what? Course I'll miss mom and Dick; and doc's talking foolish as hell. He's talking about temporary delusion. Imagine that? His voice is thin and strident. His hair as white as mine. And his face, as withered as last year's grape still hanging on the vine spring — his shriveled old face is almost as old as mine.

Frank Sinatra Confidential

GANGSTERS IN THE NIGHT CLUBS

Lee Mortimer

THOUGH SOME five million words of testimony and assorted reports emanated from the Kefauver committee, not a line was printed which dealt with the infiltration of the organized underworld into the entertainment field, except for those cases where night-club tie-ins were directly connected with gambling operations. There were a number of practical reasons for ignoring the subject. By common repute, the night-club racket is no longer a profitable one, at least in the ledgers. The legitimate side of show business, too, is but a hollow shell of its once lusty self, scarcely worth the trouble required for gangsters to muscle in or probers to probe. The twin giants of movies and broadcasting, however, have created fertile fields

for the operations of the modern hoodlum who invests in and finally takes over legitimate industries, not through gun and stink bomb as formerly, but through stock ownership and elaborate corporate set-ups.

For years, the movies have been lush pastures for Mafia affiliates who used their control of certain unions as an opening wedge. The government half-heartedly prosecuted some key figures a few years ago. Some of the boys and two movie executives received jail sentences. As soon as the hue and cry died down, they were all quietly paroled.

The Kefauver committee was supplied with copious evidence proving that the underworld was still an important factor in Hollywood. A contemplated investigation mysteri-

ously evaporated after committee counsel Rudolph Halley was seen at New York's swank El Morocco spending an evening with a publicist representing the film companies. Shortly afterwards, Senator Kefauver signed up to do the prologue for a movie. Mr. Halley's law firm got a new client, a distillery, which, by chance, was also represented by the roving ambassador from Hollywood. In the subsequent committee hearings, the cinema capital was conspicuous by its absence.

It was, in a way, a pity the committee did not dig into show business. A few handsome profiles and well-rounded figures would not have hurt the TV broadcasts. A few real belly laughs might have supplied a welcome respite from the bleak humor of the dessicated deacon from New Hampshire. If the quizzers had dug into the history of gangster manipulations on Broadway, TV audiences might have enjoyed the classic about *Strike Me Pink*, a musical which was financed by underworld angels and which starred Jimmy Durante and Lupe Velez. A dozen or more of the boys, including Waxey Gordon, kittied the bankroll. That gave them the privilege of putting their molls in the cast and sitting in on rehearsals. As one girl went through her paces, one of the patrons loudly inquired:

"Is dat your bim, Joe?"

"Nah!" came the answer.

"Whose bim is she?"

"Nobody's."

"Den whadduhell is she doin' in our show?"

THE AVERAGE American, whose salary is pretty well taken care of by taxes and family burdens, does not patronize the cabarets. All he knows about them is what he sees in the movies, which represent them with their customary verisimilitude. In pictures, all night clubs are bigger than Radio City and every table is occupied by a wealthy playboy and his girl, both impeccably clad in evening clothes. The owner of the establishment is usually pictured as a sinister but suave character who does his masterminding in an elaborately furnished hidden office reached through a series of magically controlled doors, each guarded by a hefty cut-throat. This proprietor usually turns out to be a gangster with powerful connections.

Except for the last-mentioned item, the Hollywood representation is the stuff that dreams are made of. These baroque hippodromes have no present-day counterparts. Most night clubs are small places with postage-stamp dance floors. The greatest number of them are sleazy, poorly patronized dives. Out of the thirty thousand or more such establishments licensed throughout the nation, there are scarcely a handful that even pay expenses. It seems difficult to believe that the underworld which now operates with such

blue chips as railroads, banks, insurance companies, steamship lines, and hotel chains, should want to bother with such paltry stuff. Nevertheless, the mob is heavily involved in night clubs and other branches of the amusement industry. I found it out a few years ago, when, after Frank Sinatra took a poke at me, my curiosity led me to do a little detective work on him. For a crooner, he throws a suspiciously forceful wallop.

The remarkable fact about the failure of the Kefauver committee to investigate show business is that it takes so little effort to turn up information about the Mafia's infiltration into the entertainment world. Any investigator could have looked up the Treasury file from which I learned a great deal about Sinatra. The biography of the New Jersey songbird is typical of present-day careers in the entertainment jungle.

The dossier said, in effect, that the crooner had been adopted by underworld big shots for the specific purpose of making his sponsors seem respectable, thereby furthering their business enterprises, which included, among others, the wholesale distribution of narcotics. The report went on to state that Frankie was by no means a rare case. Many well-known entertainment figures had been "captured," either with or without their knowledge, by the underworld, the Communists, or both. The Communists and the gangsters both have

the same motive, acquiring respectability by association with prestige names. Frankie's contacts with both groups are numerous.

ACCORDING TO the report, Sinatra's close friendship and association with known narcotics peddlers and dope addicts was constantly advertised to propagandize kids with a taste for the fast life and surround dope-taking with glamor. How Frankie reached his present eminent position is a fairly complicated story and illustrative of the methods whereby the Mafia (as well as the Communists) exploits susceptible stars. It is a far cry from the old methods of the Black Hand (the name by which the Mafia was formerly known — the organization, incidentally, for all its pulp-fiction sound, is a very real and realistic one) which used to compel every Italian to kick in a tithe of his earnings, from the bootblack who came across with a dime a day to Enrico Caruso, who contributed a thousand a night from his ten-thousand-dollar singing dates.

Sinatra's father was a professional pug, a preliminary fighter who never got out of Jersey City. At the beginning of his career, strange as it may sound, the young Sinatra was following in his father's footsteps. Frankie spent quite a period as a local semi-pro, fighting in neighborhood clubs for peanuts and dreaming of the championship. Then one of those

meetings that make history occurred. Willie Moretti, alias Moore, kingpin of the Jersey rackets and cousin of Joe Adonis, "discovered" the struggling lad in a Hoboken gym. He was impressed by the kid's style and offered to take him under his wing and make a real boxer out of him. Frankie accepted and trained briefly under the Moretti aegis but soon showed that he lacked "heart." Meanwhile, with more folding money than he had dreamed of in his pocket, supplied by generous Moretti, he had become a flashy local playboy and spent more time in the bars than he did in the gyms.

The versatile Frankie then became impressed with his own larynx and decided to become a singer. Moretti went along with his new ambition. The mob got Sinatra a job in the Rustic Cabin, a Jersey roadside retreat where he made his singing debut at thirty-five dollars a week. Patron saint Moretti couldn't bear to see the gifted youngster struggling along on a pittance so he was also kept liberally supplied with pocket money. He also kept his boy out of trouble. About this time, Frankie was arrested in Bergen County on a sex charge and held in jail overnight. As a respected and prominent Jersey citizen, Moretti managed to have the complaint reduced to seduction, then dropped by the plaintiff when the Grand Jury failed to indict the fledgling crooner. Frankie was on his way up.

Frankie had outgrown New Jersey and was ripe for the big time. With Moretti behind him, he did not have to make it the hard way. The underworld owns so many night clubs that it is one of the largest purchasers of theatrical talent in the country. As a consequence, all kinds of people in the entertainment world are obligated to the leaders and prefer to remain on friendly terms with them. When Moretti put out the word that a good job for Frankie would be appreciated, Sinatra did not have to wait long before he found himself a featured vocalist on Tommy Dorsey's band.

HIS RAPID RISE to popularity on his own thereafter is common knowledge but the gangster wire-pulling behind the scenes is not. Sinatra was a swaggering, flashy kid who liked being associated with mobsters and frequently pretended to be one. He always carried a gun and continued to long after the Los Angeles sheriff told the press that he had taken it away. Among Frankie's intimates at this time were the infamous Fischetti brothers of Chicago — cousins of Al Capone. The younger Fischetti was just about Frankie's age. The two hit it off well and made the rounds together, drinking, chasing women, and generally keeping themselves amused.

Frankie had become a huge success and was now a limelight-bathed,

valuable piece of property. There was, however, a slight hindrance to his further exploitation and increased prosperity. His contract was owned by the canny Tommy Dorsey. Sinatra offered him seventy-five thousand dollars to be released and was promptly refused. His contract had seven years to run and Frankie was already pulling in about a million and a half a year, with Dorsey collecting one third of it as his share. Shortly after the breakdown of negotiations, Dorsey told me, he was visited by three business-like men, who told him out of the sides of their mouths to "sign or else." Frankie got his release pronto.

The Fischettis had now taken over the handling of Frankie's huge and difficult finances. Frankie isn't the disloyal type, however. He still remained on close terms with his original angel, Moretti. When Moretti's daughter got married, Frankie sang at the wedding to which he was escorted from New York by a delegation of New York motorcycle cops. After the festivities, Frankie presented the bride with an autographed photo and all was sweetness and light.

Although Frankie's income was large enough to support a large part of New Jersey, he suffered frequently from "the shorts." Unfortunately, he had hit his peak at the very time when surtaxes had reached their all-time high. The Chicago boys continually found themselves

called upon to reinvest goodly sums, often running into the six figure bracket. It wouldn't have been nice to have a bigtime crooner running around in dungarees. The payoff, naturally, was the underworld's use of Sinatra as a front. He was constantly in the company of the brothers Fischetti and assorted syndicate big shots. He once traveled in a private plane from Las Vegas to Palm Springs with the flying Fischettis and a stagestruck Detroit automobile tycoon. Shortly afterwards, the Syndicate began to acquire agency franchises in big cities to sell that particular make of car. The Fischettis had got back their investment with interest.

I HAVE IN my collection of historic Twentieth Century documents a photostat of the manifest of a Pan-American airways flight from Miami to Havana in February, 1947. It reveals that Sinatra flew to Cuba in the company of Joe and Rocco Fischetti. Also in my collection is a photograph showing Sinatra alighting in Havana from that plane surrounded by two men who hid their faces. A microscopic study of the shy pair definitely identifies the faces as belonging to the nomadic Fischettis. But the most unusual item in the picture is a heavy suitcase which was being lugged by Sinatra. What makes the suitcase unusual is the fact that airplane passengers do not carry their own baggage off

planes. Furthermore, if they are a Sinatra, they don't carry baggage. His two companions were not burdened at all.

It later developed that this gay trio was on their way to visit Charles "Lucky" Luciano, the international vice king who, having been deported to his native Italy, had sneaked back secretly to Havana. The entire criminal syndicate had been notified and a small assembly, for which thirty-six rooms in the leading Havana hotel were engaged, had been convoked.

Meanwhile, the U. S. Bureau of Narcotics had made a few arrangements of its own. Luciano's phone was tapped, with his calls to the mainland receiving particular attention. It was discovered that a wire was kept constantly open between the Colonial Inn, in Hallendale, Florida, and "Lucky's" hotel room. Narcotics Commissioner Harry J. Anslinger definitely established that Luciano was still in undisputed command of the complex operations of the infamous and powerful *Unione Siciliano*.

The night before he flew to Havana, Sinatra and Joe Fischetti paid a visit to the Colonial Inn, a luxurious gambling den owned by Joe Adonis and Meyer Lansky. Frankie put on a free show for his friends who doubtless offered some reciprocal entertainment.

The T-men were as yet not ready to break the story of Luciano's

presence in Cuba. He had, however, been seen holding court in the Havana Casino, surrounded by mobsters, gorgeous women, Hollywood celebrities, among them Sinatra, and such Syndicate big shots as the Fischettis, Ralph Capone, Joe Adonis, and Frank Costello. The doings of the international set are always big news and an American columnist found the goings-on too good to keep to himself. After an ultimatum from the Narcotics Bureau, the Cubans unwillingly gave Luciano the nudge and he returned to Italy with good long notices in the press.

DURING THE less public part of his stay in Cuba, a considerable amount of time had been spent by "Lucky" and his boys figuring out ways to have transferred to him the huge sums of money he had coming for past and future narcotic transactions. Bank drafts can be easily traced and bills of large denominations are suspect. So, according to the story released by government men, the boys got the idea of passing over the loot in small currency units carried in hand luggage by celebrities who would be given the freedom of the port because of their prestige. The same week Sinatra and the flying Fischettis visited "Lucky" in Cuba, the Feds reported that two million dollars had been delivered to Luciano by Rocco Fischetti, transported "in the hand luggage of an entertainer." When Italian

police raided Luciano's apartment last year they found, among other objets d'art, a solid gold cigarette case inscribed, "to my dear pal Lucky, from his friend, Frank Sinatra."

Besides the acquisition of glamorous celebrities the underworld acquires many substantial benefits from its multi-million dollar entertainment investments, and, indeed, its show-business and night-club parties are an indispensable part of its organization. For one thing, since repeal, many of the largest American and Canadian distillers, as well as some wine and liquor importers, are owned by the hoodlums who bought into them with their swollen prohibition profits. Night clubs are perfect outlets for their wares.

Although many of the night clubs show a loss on the books, modern corporate set-ups utilize this fact in a diversity of ways. A man can lose on the operation of one of them but more than make up for it in the profit he obtains from his liquor sales to it. Some are operated to obtain convenient "tax losses" for the boys, to get rid of unlisted funds or to cheat Uncle Sam of income and amusement taxes. One of the gaudiest New York saloons never shows a profit on its books though hundreds of thousands are distributed to the bosses every year. Prices in this club are unusually moderate but it is impossible to get a table without slipping the headwaiter from five to

twenty dollars. Of this sum he keeps 10 per cent; the balance, in cash, goes back to the gangster owners. Frank Costello has a fifty-thousand-dollar investment in it.

The underworld is dependent on a huge machine of workers, and when crime times are slow, the lower caste still has to be taken care of. It is cheaper to put them on the payroll in various parts of the entertainment and night-club world than simply to pension them. By absorbing thousands of unemployed hangers-on, the night clubs keep the huge underworld machine together. Another purpose served by the cabaret is the development of new acts. There is no vaudeville today, few road shows and stock companies. The saloon is the cradle of talent and many of the "finds" go on to Hollywood, radio and television, owned outright by the mob. One of the biggest American comedy teams, earning twenty thousand dollars a week, is in this position at the moment.

BY NOW, the financial position of the gangsters and their activities are all interrelated and each section of their operations is involved in all the rest. The night clubs are also a priceless communications system for the underworld without which they would be greatly hampered. A large percentage of its messages are delivered in them in one way or another. For example, it will be known

that Frank Costello can be found at a certain cabaret every Wednesday night at 9:00. If you should want to deliver a message to him, all you have to do is come to the place, sit at another table, and then accidentally bump into him. In emergencies notes or verbal instructions can be left with headwaiters or owners. But the mobsters cannot be seen in the same place every night, so a string of clubs is required and augmented by gymnasiums, barber-shops, Turkish baths, and restaurants.

Show business also helps maintain the underworld's necessary social and political contacts. It may cause trouble if public figures allow their hoodlum friends to visit their houses, but the danger is minimal if they

exchange a few words in a crowded night club. In the entertainment world, the gangsters can mix freely with politicians, tycoons, union bosses, and newspapermen and build up the priceless asset of good-will in important strata.

YET, WHEN you get down to brass tacks, the most basic of all the functions the night clubs perform for the gangland leaders is the most obvious. It makes them attractive to their women, who invariably go for footlights and spotlights. Which is why, I suppose, the Kefauver committee couldn't bear to investigate them. The Senate is the last refuge of gallantry; women are eternal and there are new investigations every year.

THE GENTLE GRAFTERS

OR

HOW TO GET ALONG IN MEXICO CITY

JEAN MALAQUAIS

THE STEWARDESS wore a beautiful smile over her lovely teeth. "We're flying over Popocatepetl," she said in Spanish, with a North American accent.

"Popoc-what?" said I, staring at her beautiful mouth.

"Popocatepetl," she repeated, pleased by my ignorance. "And over there, that's Ixtacihuatl."

Jean Malaquais' latest novel, World without Visa, published here in 1948, has been called the most remarkable French book of and about this generation. He is Polish by birth, but went to France while still in his teens. He came to this country several years ago, after stints in the French army and in Nazi prison camp.

I stuck my nose against the window. The plane glided past a peak covered with snow, a black tonsure cutting through the middle. Other lesser peaks, buttressing it, rose gradually one on top of the other, but without snow and without tonsures. Some clouds, all pink and demure, rode the wings of our Douglas C-4. "It's beautiful," I said, not wanting to contradict anyone.

"*Esto es Mexico,*" the stewardess said, in a pure Texas accent.

Devouring her handsomeness, her youth, I was all admiration. She liked that; you could see it on her lips. Besides, while we had been flying over Nicaragua, she'd taught me the name of the Nicaraguan

volcano, following it with an "*esto es Nicaragua*," and a little later — "*esto es Guatemala*", and a little earlier — "*esto es . . .*", the name and volcano of each country, as if it were only natural. Now it was Mexico. The tail of the plane was vibrating and the passengers were playing with their safety-belts and I repeated, "It's beautiful," just to see the stewardess smile.

She didn't disappoint me. She showed me her teeth, and then, as a reward, even a little of her gums. The plane slipped over on one wing, feeling for the earth. The earth, reeling, responded, and with it reeled the silvery threads of roads, the claybox shanties. The stewardess, wrapped in smiles, handed me my trenchcoat, and in the loudspeaker-flanked rotunda the immigration officials began to prune the passengers' family trees.

My friend Pepita, come to meet me at the airport, asked how I liked Mexico. It was a little early for an opinion, but I thought of my stewardess and said I liked it fine. "Wonderful," declared my friend Pepita. "Give me a couple of dollars." She joined me in line and when the immigration officials claimed I was missing some stamps on my papers, she showed them the Great Seal — *Novus Ordo Seclorum* — which adorns dollar bills, and it was all straightened out.

A discussion at the customs desk concerning a cuff link followed, but

again the Great Seal *Novus* fixed things up. After my friend Pepita had talked price and told the driver to take it easy, we got in a taxi. The car started in grand fashion, skidding along on its back wheels. On the road from Puebla a big truck lay upside down, half draped over a decapitated lamppost. Our driver stopped, bounced out to get the details only to return sulkily. "*Ni siquiera un muertecito*," he said. Along the Avenue September Sixteenth, in hellish traffic, two buses full to bursting were racing each other, but our driver blithely passed them. There was a long minute there when my friend Pepita stroked my knee with reassuring little pats. Further on, we cleared, by soaring over it, the top of a bridge shaped like a hog's back, and just a little after that, we literally waltzed past a series of excavations. Then, I don't know where any more, an auto got sandwiched between two streetcars, and in one street, so fouled up that the pedestrians were crawling along like crabs, a pack of cars were howling on all fours. When we arrived at our destination, my friend Pepita offered me her pretty hand and helped me down.

"You're a little upset," she said to me. "It's because you don't know Mexicans are the best drivers in the world."

It was certainly foolish of me to have shown any emotion; if I'd been the observing type, I would have

noticed that the sainted image of the Virgin Morena protected the windshield, and that by way of an extra precaution, a baby's booty was balanced on the end of a string attached to the wiper.

NEXT DAY my friend Pepita said to me: "Why don't you take my little Ford? There's nothing like riding around the highways and byways, if you want to get to know a country. Start with the pyramids of Tenayauc and Teotihuacan. Then go to Morelia, and to Patzcuaro, then to San Miguel de Allende, then to . . ." She listed a dozen others, whose names alone made me feel like an explorer. My French driver's license not being recognized in Mexico, we took the necessary steps, and a few days later, duly armed with papers and photos, I went to the Tránsito.

The Tránsito sounded like the Stock Exchange on the day of the crash. Cops in coffee-colored uniforms, enormous revolvers at their sides and regal copper badges on their chests, were talking, milling around, and waving their arms. The aviator goggles they wore lent them a mysterious and vaguely aristocratic air. There were bootblacks too, and bookies selling tickets for the lottery, guys beating you down to buy photographs, scribes for illiterates, and, no doubt, a few neophytes like myself who wanted licenses. As for me, a young lady installed be-

hind a table glanced, boredly, at my papers and said without moving her lips: "For twenty pesetas, you can have your license in fifteen minutes."

She had stuck a mango between her lips and I thought I had misunderstood. "There must be some mistake," I said. "I've just made all the necessary arrangements. Here they are."

"For twenty pesetas," she said, gnawing the mango pit, "you can have your license without taking the examination."

"I think I'd like to take the examination," I said.

The young lady looked at me with wide honest eyes. A drop of juice ran down her chin. "You can have it in fifteen minutes," she said, "for twenty pesetas."

"And without twenty pesetas, in how many minutes?" I said.

"Pues quien sabe?" she said.

"I'm in no hurry," I said. "It's all the same to me if I have to wait a day or two."

"You don't understand Spanish," she said, handing me back the papers.

I might have asked her to give me lessons — I'm always willing to learn — but she wasn't my type. In a room with camouflaged windows a man wearing smoked glasses examined my papers. "Read," he said.

"B-T-F-W," I read.

"You can't drive," he said. "You're blind."

I began to laugh. "Give me your professional card," I said. "I'll pay you a visit."

"I'm not an oculist," he said. "Over there."

Over there a fat bald man was smoking a cigar. Like his colleague, He-Who-Was-Not-an-Oculist, he looked for I don't know what magic password among my papers. A stethoscope hung down his neck, but he seemed content just to rest his hand somewhere in the neighborhood of my heart. "You've got heart trouble," he said, looking out the window. "You're going to die."

I'm open to humor, even the macabre kind — as long as it's well put. "How much time have I got?" I said.

The man with the stethoscope pulled on his cigar. He looked at the window and then out of it into a vast court where there was nothing to see. "Not much," he said.

In front of the Tránsito building a policeman who looked like Tarzan jumped into the car I had rented to take the examination. I was getting ready to start it, when he shook his head. "No," he said. "You can't drive. You're too nervous."

"We'll see," I said, putting my foot on the clutch.

Tarzan stuck his mitt into my thigh, and knocked me on the knee, and I let go the pedal. "There. You can see you're nervous," he said. "Mexico, that's what makes foreigners nervous. It's too high for them."

He was right, it was too high for me. At lunch, my friend Pepita said to me: "How do you like Mexico?"

"Fine," I said. "It's a little high but I like it fine."

"Yes," my friend Pepita said. "It is high. You look tired."

I went to look at myself in the mirror. Then I went to see a doctor.

I SWORE to myself, even if I had to tour the country on foot, never to get a Mexican driver's license. But Mexico's a beautiful country, I'm much too lazy, and besides I don't believe in oaths. So, a few weeks later I went to the Tránsito again. As I climbed the concrete steps, a bootblack grabbed me by the sleeve.

"You look like somebody who wants a driver's license."

"That's right," I said. "You're a good physiognomist."

"A good what?" he said suspiciously.

"So? The permit?" I asked.

"The permit. That's twenty-five pesetas," he said, still holding my sleeve.

"What? Twenty-five? Two months ago a young lady who sucked mangos only wanted twenty."

"Two months ago is two months ago. Where've you been? On the moon? Don't you know the cost of living has gone up in two months?"

I apologized for not having thought of it, and handed him twenty-five pesetas. He left me his

shoe-shine box, telling me to keep an eye on it. I leaned against a wall, my negotiator's box at my feet, and waited. The sun was out, there were blue pinafores, black mops of hair, petticoats in bloom. Walking behind their aviator's goggles, the cops threw out their chests and pulled in their fannies. Others came and went on motorcycles that were exploding gloriously. All kinds of sharpies were hanging around, on the prowl for a sucker. Seeing me with a shine box, now and then somebody would offer me work. My middleman returned after twenty minutes or so. He had the license.

"That was quick," he said, quite satisfied with himself. "You ought to give me another peseta. I'm a family man."

I gave him the peseta. He'd well earned it, since he hadn't bothered me with blindness or apoplexy or epilepsy. At the table my friend Pepita said to me: "How do you like Mexico?"

"Fine," I said. "It's really something."

"Yes," my friend Pepita said. "It's a great place. You look well."

I took a look in the mirror. Then I got into the little Ford and away I went. Three minutes later a cop flagged me. He had holes in his sleeves and some buttons were missing from his washed-out uniform. "Hey!" he said. "Can't you see you're not allowed to make a left turn?"

I leaned out one side, then the other, and saw nothing. "No, I don't see anything," I said.

"It's absolutely against the law to make a left turn," he said. "Let's see your license."

I showed him my license. "It's new," he said.

"New all over, *nuevicio*," I said.

"You can't make the turn," he said.

"How am I supposed to know that if there's no sign?"

"But there is a sign," he said.

"There's no sign," I said.

He kept saying yes and I kept saying no. We went over to find out. There was no more of a sign there than on my hand.

"Nah, you see," I said. "Give me back my license."

"Somebody stole the sign," he said.

"Well make a new one and give me back my license."

"You can't make the turn," he said. "Everybody knows that. There's a car. You'll see. It won't turn left."

The car drew up and turned left. "That's because it's the police," the cop said. "We'll wait for another one."

Another car came up and turned left. "*Es un policía tambien*," the cop said.

"It's all the same to me," I said. "Let's have the license."

"*La Policía* is allowed to turn any way they want to," he said.

"Let's wait for another car."

We waited. Another car came and turned left. "*Es un policía más,*" the cop said. "Let's wait for another one."

"Come on. We'll go to the station," I said. "Hop in."

He got in and began picking his nose. "You'll lose a lot of time at the station," he said.

"How much time?"

"*Pues quien sabe?*" he said, finger in nose. "All night, or maybe two nights. My boss always says to me: 'Jimenez, you shouldn't bother the motorist.' 'Of course I shouldn't, *mi jefe,*' I tell him, 'but if the motorists don't want to obey?' 'All right,' says *mi jefe,* 'you bring them to me, and I'll teach them to obey.' " He shifted finger and nostril. "He's not agreeable, *mi jefe.* Me, I'm different."

"Where's your station?" I said.

"Myself," he said. "I don't bother anybody. I'm easygoing." He wiped his fingers on the inside of his uniform. "*Que calor, mamacita. Y que sed . . .*"

That he was thirsty, was possible; that he had held forth with such eloquence merely to keep me informed, seemed less so. "How about a drink?" I said.

"What I need," he said, fanning himself with my license, "is a peseta. I'll drink your health."

I gave him the wherewithal to drink my health.

When the time came for my friend Pepita to accompany me to the station, many, many *policías* had drunk my health. When one of them whistled after me, I handed him my license without waiting for the malarkey; opening the little book, he would find therein a peseta neatly folded in quarters. They all thought that was fine, and what each lost by way of dialectic he made up in time.

In the plane, the stewardess wore the lovely smile of service over her fine teeth. As we passed over Tampico, she informed me it was Tampico. After flying over the border, a little before landing, she sprayed the cockpit with a Flit-gun that went puff-puff. "It's to kill the Latin-American mosquitoes," she told me in Spanish, with a Texan accent. And since she saw that I admired her sweet mouth, she asked: "Have you ever been to the United States?"

"No, it's the first time," I said.

The plane bounced onto the cement runway and stopped. The dog days of Brownsville jumped and bit me from head to foot.

A thousand North American mosquitoes invaded the cockpit, mourning the death of the Latin American mosquitos. The stewardess, wearing her smile, handed me my coat.

"How do you like the United States?" she said to me in English, in a Southern accent.

Translated by George Schloss.

The Character of the Lover

A STORY

Wright Morris

FOR NO OTHER PURPOSE, it would seem, than to accommodate Dr. Emil Hodler, the drug store in his neighborhood put in a large table of bargain books. Publishers' remainders, as they were called. There was no clerk assigned to this table, but the young man who worked behind the notions counter would come forward and take Dr. Hodler's twenty-

nine cents. It was usually for one of Dr. Hodler's books. On the jacket of the book there would be a picture of Dr. Hodler, looking like Franz Werfel, but the shock of recognition never crossed the young man's face.

"You like it wrapped?" he would say, and there was never anything in his manner to indicate that he was speaking to the author himself. He was either not very bright, or he didn't seem to care.

This young man was called Robert by the other clerks. Dr. Hodler was familiar with the type, and there had been a time, not too long ago, when he thought all of these idle, handsome young men were snobbish customers. Free to roam through the better class men's stores more or less as they pleased. He still found it hard to believe that these casual creatures were clerks. If Robert differed from these strange young men it was largely due to the notions department, the counter piled high with electric fans, irons, and heating pads. The quality of his deliberation was also harder to define. Dr. Hodler simply felt addle-pated and foolish when he talked with him.

In something more than the clinical sense, Robert began to interest Dr. Hodler when he found that the young man took a certain interest in the world of books. In particular, those that Dr. Hodler picked out. He often asked just what such and such a book was about. With this in mind, Dr. Hodler was careful to

buy only those books that would tend to develop a young man's taste. His own, for example, when they turned up, otherwise the more familiar classics.

It soon reached a point, however, where Dr. Hodler was sorely pressed to find on the bargain table something that he could recommend. In this extremity he settled for a doubtful book of his own. Doubtful, considering Robert's inexperience. The hero in *Blast* — a man somewhat taller, but otherwise not unlike Dr. Hodler — was hamstrung and helpless because of his basic sense of decency. Respect for his fellow man hampered him at every point. Like Hamlet, he was crippled by hours of fruitless analysis. Seeking to understand, to fathom, he had lost the will to act. As this would be quite a dose for Robert, Dr. Hodler let several days pass, nearly a week, before going back for a report.

"Well, how did you get along?" he inquired, which was the way Robert himself would have put it. Robert deliberated even less than usual.

"The character of the lover is not my type," Robert said.

This was not much, certainly, in the way of classic criticism, but it summed up the difference between the characters accurately.

"Ah-so—" Dr. Hodler said, being somewhat at a loss for words, and looked at Robert with an eye as to what type of lover he might be. He

found it hard to say. By and large he would be the silent type.

"No, he's not my type—" Robert said, and then disappeared behind the notions counter, where he wrapped a heating pad for a lady customer.

ON THE BARGAIN table, that afternoon, were several reprint copies of a book that Dr. Hodler had been careful not to recommend. A book of romantic nonsense that belonged to another, now dead world. A book that the author ironically called *This Side of Paradise*. But in the light of Robert's opinion, Dr. Hodler felt just perverse enough to pick this book from the table and offer it to him.

"Is it more my type?" said Robert.

"You let me know," Dr. Hodler said, and went off. That was not at all like him, not a bit. But he was a man who expected too much from books. He expected them to mean as much to others, for instance, as they had meant to him. The feeling that Robert was rather hopeless led him to stay away for more than a week, and he even thought of buying his remainders somewhere else. But a habit is a habit, so he wandered back. Even as he entered the store he could see that something had happened to Robert, as he waved — he beckoned to him, that is, Dr. Hodler dallied with the heating pads before idling up.

"There you are," said Robert, "where have you been?"

"I've been pretty busy —" Dr. Hodler began, implying that some people he knew were not, but Robert was not listening to him.

"I've read them —" he said.

"You've read what?" said Dr. Hodler.

"I'm in love with her too," said Robert. "I know exactly how he feels."

"Who is this —?" said Dr. Hodler.

"Daisy," Robert said. As Dr. Hodler looked blank, Robert added, "You know, Gatsby's Daisy."

Now Dr. Hodler had once, long ago, looked into the Gatsby book. He had read it in France, in a pirated edition featuring a profile snapshot of the author, and appropriately titled, *Gatsby, Le Magnifique*. It hadn't impressed him much.

"You liked it?" Dr. Hodler asked.

"He's my type," Robert said.

"He's a little old-fashioned —" Dr. Hodler began.

"You knew him?" said Robert.

"I saw him once," said Dr. Hodler, as indeed he had, and he cleared his throat to describe that strange affair. He started — then he stopped, as it suddenly crossed his mind that Robert meant the character, not the author, of the book.

"What was he like?" Robert said, and rose to his full height, waiting for Dr. Hodler to comment on the resemblance. When he didn't, Robert said, "Will you have lunch with

me?"

It startled both of them.

"I'd be glad to," Dr. Hodler said, "but as I was saying, right now I'm pretty busy."

"I'm right around the corner," Robert said, "we'll have it in my apartment," and he took from his pocket a small pigskin card case, removed one card, passed it to Dr. Hodler. *Robert Gollen*, it said, and gave his address on Park Avenue. "So we can talk," said Robert, "we can't talk here." Then he took the card from Dr. Hodler's hand and wrote a few words on the back of it. . . .

Tuesday, the 17th, at 12 a.m.

returned the card to him, and disappeared behind the notions counter. What Robert had to say, it was clear, would have to wait for the proper time.

THAT TUESDAY was a warm day for the season, and Dr. Hodler carried his coat as he walked in the sun on Park Avenue. The address on the card, a brownstone mansion with a reconverted schizoid air, had boards over the stairs while a few stone steps were being repaired. As he started up the stairs, he heard somebody call his name. Directly overhead, about three floors up, Robert had his head through a narrow window.

"Would you please use the door at the side?" he said, and waved his arm to indicate which one. Dr.

Hodler went back to the street and around to a small door clearly labeled Service Entrance, which had been propped open with a soiled copy of *Blast*. As he stepped inside he could hear the voice of Robert. "I'm here on three," he called.

Up on the third Dr. Hodler entered a hallway, and at the far end of it, beckoning, looking small in the doorway, was Robert. On the tile floor in the hallway Dr. Hodler's shoes made quite a stir. Robert stepped to one side to let him in, then closed the door at his back, and Dr. Hodler turned to face, on a low platform, an enormous rose-colored bathtub. He had seen such a tub — he had been in it — in a Victorian tourist mansion in Mexico City, and along with the tub there had been an arboretum and a pair of chained birds. At the far end of the room, like a faint blue lantern, a narrow ventilating window opened on an airwell, letting in the hushed roar of the traffic on Park Avenue. As Dr. Hodler had friends who sometimes specialized in bizarre entrances to their apartments, he thought this was merely one more of them. Or that the young man thought he might like to use the facilities. He waited, as the room was dim and he couldn't make out the other doorway, when Robert said, "You like to look over my books?"

Dr. Hodler was so sure that was meant to be funny, that he turned with a smile on his face, ready to grin

at another American joke. But there before him, at the foot of the tub, was a shelf of books. Dr. Hodler stood there, facing these books, while Robert went off to prepare the lunch — that is to say, that he walked to the other end of the room. Dr. Hodler could hear the sound of the silver, the pat-pat of the paper plates, and the pop of the cork as a bottle was opened.

"I hope you like shrimp salad," Robert said, and Dr. Hodler turned to say that he simply loved shrimp, and see that a card table had been placed over one end of the tub. As the tub curved in at that end, there was room for two folding chairs with stainless steel frames, and soft leather backs and seats. Dr. Hodler had seen them in a window at Abercrombie & Fitch. Over the table Robert had spread a cloth with monogrammed napkins to mark their places, and at each place was a Danish silver knife and fork. Paper spoons stood up in a piece of Steuben glass. "Well, I guess we're all ready," Robert said, and as Dr. Hodler drew up his chair, Robert smiled and made, so to speak, just a passing remark — "I do without it," he said, "until I can buy the best."

The shrimps — as Dr. Hodler remembered later — were very good. They were served with a sauce of his own concoction and a bottle of Semmelweiss Sauterne, an inexpensive, native wine that he found, as he said, fairly tolerable. The rest of

the luncheon came out of cartons as Robert simply didn't have the time, with an hour off for lunch, to prepare everything. They had strong black coffee from a Thermos, and at the bottom of his cup, when he tipped it up, Dr. Hodler observed the label of Black, Starr & Frost.

While they ate, Robert talked. Dr. Hodler missed some of the details as his interest was divided, but Robert had a way of making his points.

"You know, my name is not Gollen," he said, in a manner that got Dr. Hodler's attention; then he added, "Like Gatsby, I just picked it up. Does it matter?" he continued, when he saw the look on Dr. Hodler's face.

"Not intrinsically —" began Dr. Hodler, "but —"

"I just didn't like it," Robert said, "and now I wonder what I saw in Gollen?" He deliberated for a moment, then said, "The name I like is Nick — but that's your name."

"My name?" said Dr. Hodler.

"You know —" said Robert, "Gatsby and Nick," and Dr. Hodler, a little vaguely, remembered. It had been Nick who told Gatsby's story, so to speak. Dr. Hodler smiled, then stopped as Robert leaned forward and said, "Would you like to hear something of my story now, Nick?"

With the napkin Dr. Hodler wiped his face, then nodded his head.

WELL, IT WAS quite a little story, Robert said, as first of all his mother was an actress, and they had been on the go all of the time, on the continent. Living in Paris, Biarritz, Algiers, Monte Carlo, and places like that. He had shuffled in and out of expensive private schools. It had left its mark. His grounding in the classics was very poor. Then his mother married a Spanish count, old family with nothing but honor, and in no time at all their small inheritance was wiped out. To make a long story short, the count soon died, after several years of mourning his mother died, and Robert had drifted aimlessly about on different tramp steamers. Picking up experience, but little else. Nothing that would help him very much in his professional life. However, he had plans — nationwide plans to distribute ten-cent books through drug stores — but he needed someone he could trust with the literary end of it. Someone like Nick, who could fill in where his own background fell short.

He stopped there — it was where he had planned to stop. He excused himself, rose from the table, and left Dr. Hodler to puzzle out for himself if what he had heard was Gatsby, was Gollen, or was merely applesauce. A good deal of it had a familiar ring. At the far end of the room Dr. Hodler could see a large steamer trunk, well pasted with labels, and Robert appeared to be inside of it.

He was looking for a key to a small drawer in the compartment section. Dr. Hodler remained at the table, sipping his black coffee and gazing at the half dozen pairs of shoes, in shoe trees, under the tub. In the tub, extending its length, was a narrow foam rubber mattress with the bed clothes folded neatly over the drain.

Coming back to the table, Robert extended to Dr. Hodler a tooled morocco folder, which he opened on a large glossy photograph. It showed Robert, wearing a tourist cap with the flaps tied with a bow at the crown, standing in the midst of quantities of small luggage, several steamer trunks. Every piece of the luggage was stamped with the exotic labels of the world. Directly behind was a painted screen, meant to represent a departing steamer, from the deck of which many kisses were thrown, and others waved small flags. The photograph was a joke, one of those things country boys mailed home after a weekend in the city, but the young man in the tourist cap, the plus fours, and the rubber-soled shoes for deck tennis, gazed from the luggage with deliberate serenity. It was not funny. And Dr. Hodler did not laugh.

"Back from the West Indies," Robert said, and took the folder from Dr. Hodler, walked back to the end of the room, and placed it in the trunk. Then he closed the trunk with a snap, and turned to ask Dr. Hodler if he would mind passing him

the silver, the knives first. Dr. Hodler was glad to, and Robert rinsed the silver under the faucet in the basin, then rinsed the glasses, placing them on a paper towel to dry. The silver Robert returned to a non-tarnish flannel case. Looking at his watch he announced that it was now one o'clock, and faced the mirror on the bathroom door to comb his hair. Then they went back down the stairs that Dr. Hodler had come up, and at the foot of the stairs, soberly, Robert shook his hand. It was clear to Dr. Hodler that he had made some kind of pact. He stood there, in the Service Entrance, watching Robert go down the street shoulder to shoulder with the men who set the style. But with a little more shoulder, and a little more style, than the rest of them.

As he was very busy, he didn't get around again for several weeks. Robert was not in the store the next time he dropped in. He had his own day off, of course, and Dr. Hodler didn't think anything about it until the next time, when an elderly man was there.

"Is Mr. Gollen on vacation?" Dr. Hodler inquired.

"Who?" said the clerk. "Oh him. No, he got fired."

"Robert left?" Dr. Hodler said, as a pact, after all, had been made.

"Nope, he was fired," said the old man. "Guess he slapped one of the customers."

"He what?" said Dr. Hodler.

"I didn't see it," said the clerk, "but Mr. Prewitt, the boss, saw him slap him." Dr. Hodler waited, and the old man said, "Guess it was one of these anti-Jewish books, and this fellow Gollen just refused to sell it to him. Said if he wanted stuff like that he'd have to buy it somewhere else. Now you can't treat the public like that," the old man said.

"You say he slapped him?" said Dr. Hodler, as the lover in Dr. Hodler's book, in the continental manner, slapped the Nazi thug who then shot him.

"I guess this customer got a little peeved and made some anti-Jewish remark himself, and then this Gollen asked him to please step outside. Right out there in the street, right there on the curb, he slapped him in the face."

Dr. Hodler closed his eyes. He tried to picture it.

"He was wearin' the company jacket," said the old man, "with the name right there on the jacket." He reflected, then said, "If he'd just hit him, it wouldn't have been so bad."

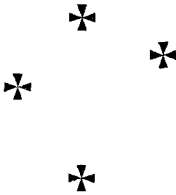
Dr. Hodler thanked him, and as he said so many times in his own books, went for a walk with his thoughts. He went up Park Avenue, but he found the Service Entrance was locked. No copy of *Blast* now

held open the door. Dr. Hodler felt responsible, somehow, as if had it not been for himself, and his bookish habits, the boy would still have his job. He felt like going back to the drug store and explaining to Mr. Prewitt that this strange act had been committed by somebody else. That the youth they had hired, Robert Gollen by name, had little to do with it. But he didn't. Perhaps he wasn't too sure of it himself. Instead, he sat down and wrote a letter, addressing himself to *My dear Gatsby*, and saying that the plan he had spoken of interested him very much. He suggested the date for another luncheon, and then signed the note, *Yours, Nick*.

TEN DAYS LATER, unopened, the letter came back. Across the left-hand corner, in pencil, someone had scribbled:

R. Gatsby Gollen gone to NAVY

That was all. That was all the news of Gatsby that he ever had. But when the war broke out, a few months later, Dr. Hodler found himself giving special attention to all the casualty lists. The lists of heroes, especially. One of these days, he knew, R. Gatsby Gollen would turn up.



Foreign Intelligence

Ghostly Clankings in Berlin



EDOUARD RODITI

SOME FIFTEEN YEARS ago, Hermann Goering, fat enough to view the future with the confidence of a well-humped camel setting out to cross a desert, announced to all Germans that they would have to eat less butter in order to have more guns. This decree condemned German cuisine and especially the German pastry-cook's art to an underground or black-market existence. Creative ingenuity had to be expended on the discovery of substitute ingredients for old delicacies rather than on inventing new recipes. Nazidom was thus the first great European oligarchy, since the age of Brillat-Savarin's *Physiologie du Goût*, to have come and gone without leaving us any gastronomical monuments.

For the majority of Germans who can still afford no luxuries, the lean

years that Goering heralded have lasted until now. For a small but loud minority of Marshall Plan profiteers and other wise guys and their mates, it has again been possible, since the currency reform in June, 1948, and the ensuing liberalization of West-German importing policies, to enjoy good fancy pastry at legal prices, in all the cafés and Konditorei-shops of Western Germany.

This astounding recovery of German cuisine did not affect Western Berlin until a year later. When the Blockade was at last lifted in May, 1949, small crowds of contented gourmets began to congregate, all through the summer, on the terraces of Western Berlin's cafés too. At first, everything was served swimming in butter or smothered in whipped cream, though both these

dollar-earning products were still rationed in victorious Denmark. In the minds of defeated Germany's cooks and their customers, however, an extravagant use of animal fats was an expression of faith in Western democracy as opposed to the totalitarian régimes that frown upon a *laissez-faire* economy in kitchen and bakery.

Many of these fair-weather democrats have regained so much weight that slimming is again a permissible topic of conversation in the few surviving salons of Berlin's decimated polite society. But Marienbad, in Czechoslovakia, is now behind the Iron Curtain. The pot-bellied Germans who used to go there each summer until 1945 must now anxiously scan the Western horizon for less dangerous resorts that will offer, in July and August, the same reducing cures.

Meanwhile, Berlin's privileged Café Society — only one West-Berliner out of every ten can afford as a Sunday treat their daily feasts — still crowd the Kurfuerstendamm's café terraces, sunning themselves there all through the summer afternoons. Biliously, they discuss the latest Paris fashions, Hollywood's or Western Germany's newest musicals, or the recent German translations of *Forever Amber* and other such masterpieces of American prose that the U. S. High Commission's program of "cultural exchanges" has so generously revealed to them.

Only occasionally do they cast a slightly jaundiced eye on a newspaper headline that too overtly threatens another pastryless war. Not one of them ever seems to feel any qualms about the political wisdom of thus flaunting their conspicuous consumption of whipped cream and heavily-taxed coffee before the hungry eyes of the thousands of unemployed and of fugitives from the East who stream past their sidewalk Paradise.

BERLIN's Kurfuerstendamm, the Western World's show-case behind the Iron Curtain, indeed provides a brave but often tactless and vulgar show of peacetime prosperity. It has expensive new hotels, elegant cafés, luxurious restaurants that bill lobster and caviar on their windows in letters large enough to be read from the opposite sidewalk, first-run movie-houses, night clubs with semi-nude floor shows, stores full of flashy imports and atrociously styled domestic luxury goods, lavish neon signs and over-dressed streetwalkers, drenched in French perfume, who will accost a passing American in every dialect from northernmost Yankee to deepest Dixie. Nothing like it has been seen here since the Berlin that George Grosz once caricatured in the years that immediately followed the first World War, or since the Berlin that briefly, until the first Allied air raids, offered a kind of USO play-

ground to SS officers on furlough from massacres of Jews in Poland.

Many a summer tourist who does not stay long enough to wander far beyond Western Berlin's main thoroughfares may well be deceived by the Kurfuerstendamm's vulgar display. But poverty, unemployment, rubble, and ruins have long ago reduced most of the rest of the city to a huge slum. Fortunately, this poverty begins, as early as May, to assume at times a rakish and almost exotic air. Even those unemployed who cannot afford bathing trunks manage to devote much of their enforced idleness to swimming and sun-bathing in nudist colonies such as the one that foregathers on the shores of the secluded Teufelsee, in the Grunewald woods. In the city, their strikingly tanned complexions and bleached clothes then give many of them the affectedly casual appearance of Southern Californian college kids.

While all of Western Germany has close on two million unemployed, some three hundred thousand of these are in Western Berlin, which has to support as many of them as all of Great Britain, indeed more than Switzerland, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland together. Economic improvements, in the past eighteen months, have reduced the numbers of Western Berlin's part-time employed and of those commuters who go to work in the East.

But no appreciable dent has yet been made on the figures for the totally unemployed, and a constant flow of new refugees from the East increases the city's labor reserves about as fast as opportunities for work can be created.

In winter, the idle crowds of the unemployed gave the city's main thoroughfares a grim holiday appearance. In their depressing old overcoats, all equally yellowish-gray from wear and lack of dry cleaning, they had the air of having been spawned by the equally colorless ruins and rubble. Now, for a season, the rich are less easily distinguishable from the poor. Yet one cannot assume that all those who wear bright-colored "casual clothes" are earning a decent living. Huge shipments of cast-off clothes from American welfare agencies have provided many of Berlin's neediest citizens with the same kind of cowboy shirts, tartan lumberjacks, and flashy bobby-socks that are also affected by those young people who can actually afford to purchase themselves new American-style clothes. Generally, you can recognize the unemployed and the refugees by their pre-war shoes.

Most unemployed West-Berliners who cannot afford to live decently on their meagre monthly relief of less than twenty-five dollars per person must change, every once in a while, a few West-marks into cheaper East-marks. They then ride

East and go shopping in the Soviet-German capital's state-owned "H.O." (Handelsorganization) stores for unrationed goods. Much as the Paris subway system, under the Nazi occupation of the French capital, remained relatively free from foreign influences, Berlin's U-Bahn subway and its S-Bahn elevated now offer a visitor from abroad the best opportunities of hearing the little man's frank comments on his city's divided political and economic life.

Two out of every three of these "little men" are actually women. They know that the hotels around the Kurfuerstendamm are all full of West-German profiteers who, because labor is so much cheaper in the East, deliver yarn to the mills of Sovietized Saxony and obtain finished textiles in return. They know too that big British, American, and Swiss corporations do not hesitate to send their purchasing agents to Berlin to obtain, against hard dollars, Eastern Germany's ammonium sulphate, polysterol, chresylic acid, potassium carbonate, and other scarce chemicals. The little man or woman of Western Berlin does not see why he or she should not do a bit of profitable East-West trading too.

For months, the bakers of Kreutzberg, Wedding, Tiergarten, and New-Koelln, along the border of the Soviet Sector, have been complaining to their city government that the inhabitants of these West-Berlin working-class neighborhoods have

an unfortunate habit of buying, every day, over a hundred thousand pounds of cheaper bread in the East. All West-Berliners who cannot afford imported nylon hose wear socks or stockings from the East; many of them also patronize East-Berlin barbers or hairdressers too. Of nine West-Berlin landladies whose furnished rooms I have known in the past year, eight employ charwomen from Eastern Berlin; the ninth does all the housework herself. All nine of them send their house linen to be laundered each week beyond the Iron Curtain. On Saturday afternoons, the stores of East-Berlin's Leipzigerstrasse are moreover crowded with American, British, and French officials and their wives, all busy purchasing cheap Eastern glassware and porcelain.

IN SPITE OF police cordons organized along the sectoral border to control all this smuggling, only a few of those who try to do it on a conspicuously large scale ever get caught. The majority of border shoppers, too numerous to be checked, go back and forth unobtrusively, day in, day out, carrying those big shopping bags or brief cases which the average German adult seems to wear at all times like a prosthetic limb.

In the U-Bahn and the S-Bahn, people returning from these expeditions compare prices and discuss their trips quite openly. Yet the

walls of the West-Berlin subway stations are plastered with posters that depict them as Herr Schimpf and Frau Schande, a ghoulish couple of traitors to the Western economy who always complain about Western prices and spend all their Western earnings in the East. These trips back and forth, from East to West and West to East, have a salutary effect, however, on the morale and sense of humor of East-Berliners and West-Berliners alike.

Whenever the constant flow of one-sided cold-war propaganda of East or West begins to fray one's nerves, one need but take a subway ride to see and hear what the "truthful" press of the other "democratic" sector has to say. Eastern Berlin, still a national capital and the seat of a central government, is beginning to arise from its ruins and rubble too. Huge new government buildings, built in an Empire style that is more austere primitive and Russian than that of the Hohenzollerns, again begin to give Unter den Linden some of its lost majesty as one of the world's most impressive avenues. Everywhere, long strips of red bunting proclaim, in monumental white block letters, the commonplaces of Communist political propaganda.

From these changes of air, one generally returns more content with the air that is pumped into one's lungs at home, or at least in a better mood to bear it. Living in a kind of

ghetto that is cut off from the rest of the world by all sorts of man-made barriers, most Berliners have already developed a kind of Jewish humor that helps them grin while bearing their misfortunes. Words like "truthful" and "democratic" are often pronounced as if in quotes; sometimes, one adds to them a Yiddish word, *nebbich*, that stresses their ambiguity. Nearly all Berliners agree that their city's newspapers, East or West, subsidized or independent, are not even satisfactory as wrappings for smoked herrings.

An independent Berlin film-producing unit shot in 1950, under the direction of Ula Eith, a dramatic documentary on the life of fugitives from the East who are stranded in West-Berlin reception-camps. In an average month, three thousand such refugees cast themselves upon the charity of the impoverished city. When political pressures increase in Eastern Germany, as many as five thousand may arrive in a couple of weeks. Many of these destitute fugitives have been lured to Berlin by the propaganda of RIAS, America's German-language radio station in Berlin, which often paints embarrassingly tempting pictures of Western prosperity. Most refugees are then horrified by the poverty and despair to which they are doomed in the official reception camps and by the self-centered West's indifference to their plight.

Deserters from the East-Zone

People's Police, men who were, but a few weeks earlier, local tyrants from whose persecutions others had to flee, are granted immediate recognition as political refugees. But other fugitives who may have fled without bringing sufficient proof of immediate personal danger may have to wait for weeks, without a shelter or any means of support, before they are officially granted the right to reside in Western Berlin and to draw upon its meagre social services. Once admitted to the reception camps, the fugitives then find themselves surrounded by spies from the East. Abductions, from West to East, occur constantly.

IT SERVES THE purposes of our propaganda to undermine the morale of the Eastern People's Police by encouraging desertions which the West-Sector Berlin press then reports in daily statistics. On an average, one hundred and fifty of these Sovietized storm-troopers desert each month to Western Berlin and many more to Western Germany. In the West-Berlin press, the daily roster of their desertions somehow counterbalances that of the daily arrests of scrap-metal thieves. From the depredations of the latter, even the city's statuary is not safe. Recently, a huge and valuable bronze figure of a nude woman by Georg Kolbe, the Rodin of Berlin, was hacked to pieces overnight in the front yard of the museum that

bears the sculptor's name. It was carried off by the enterprising thieves to a British-Sector junkyard where they sold the remains for about as much as they might have earned for a day's work in a team of rubble removers.

As most of the junk that is bought by these yards has actually been stolen, many West-Berliners wonder why their Socialist City Government encourages thieving by granting licenses to dealers who are known to be willing receivers of stolen goods. If this junk-trade were "nationalized" as a monopoly of the city government, half of West-Berlin's petty crime could be discouraged; but many of West-Berlin's more enterprising unemployed would thus be deprived of their only real means of livelihood. If one goes for a summer evening walk after dark in some deserted areas of ruins, one often hears ghostly clankings in a seemingly deserted pile of rubble where a junk thief is at work. Many of these thieves have already been killed or seriously wounded by the collapse of ruins that they were looting.

Film-director Ula Eith's sponsors had hoped that "F." (Freedom), the documentary that he directed on the life of Berlin's encamped refugees, would arouse sympathy in Western Germany and inspire local governments there to bear part of Berlin's monthly load of human suffering. But every movie-house

owner in the West refused to book the film, arguing either that it was not box-office or that he was afraid of being blacklisted by the Communists. Ula Eith and his friends now bitterly remark that West-German distributors and exhibitors are clearly interested only in the leg-art of spectacular musicals in which a star of the Nazi era makes a comeback in the midst of a semi-nude chorus, all smothered in rhinestones and ostrich-plumes.

SINCE 1947, I happen to be, with French poet Alain Bosquet and German story-writer Alexander Koval, one of the three editors of *Das Lot*, Western Berlin's only independent and unsubsidized literary periodical. Our subsidized competitors all sell their publications, according to a formula calculated to discourage any private enterprise, at a price that defies commercial competition and has no relationship to their production costs. Hundreds, if not thousands, of copies of these periodicals are even distributed free. But we have to cover all our expenses from the receipts of commercial sales.

Often, for months on end, we suspend publication because we cannot scrape together enough money to buy paper or to pay the printer. Often, when we have at last managed to bring out a long-delayed issue that includes German translations of such truly creative Ameri-

can authors as Ambrose Bierce, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Henry Miller, Paul Goodman, Paul Bowles, Tennessee Williams, or Robert Lowry, some U. S. Military Government or Department of State bureaucrat takes it into his empty head to suspect us of being Communists because we choose to publish American authors who sometimes fail to depict American life as a Sunday School picnic. The subsidized press always projects upon the bored or skeptical German reader's mind a picture of America that is all sweetness and light, reason and omniscience.

This conflict between the verities of life and the fictions of bureaucratic propaganda and administration undermines almost every American action in Germany. Lord Acton once wrote that power corrupts and that absolute power corrupts absolutely. Seeing that a home built on Occupation Costs for an average American officer or official costs five times as much to the German taxpayer as a government-sponsored home for a Ruhr miner or a refugee from the East, many Germans now assume that the average American in Western Germany is already five times as corrupt as when he first arrived, a starry-eyed liberal, in 1945. Last summer, whole blocks of these American homes were built in Frankfurt, even more luxurious than those that Himmler had once built for his pampered SS and their families. This summer, other building

projects of the same nature are already under way in Bonn and in the U. S. Sector of Berlin and several cities of the American Zone. The Berlin project alone is reported by the press to cost the German taxpayer some three million dollars. Most of the American civilians who are scheduled to live in these luxury apartments admit frankly that they will keep their government jobs only as long as they continue to be pampered in this manner. They are enthusiastic about the "European way of life." Few of them have ever heard of Goethe or Schiller. Most of them can already qualify for a job as chinaware buyer for a Middle-Western department store. They can spot a Rosenthal dinner service without embarrassing their host by turning a plate upside down to examine the manufacturer's mark.

American officials in Germany indeed forget too easily that they live and work in a goldfish bowl. But their every move is watched by hundreds of interested Germans who, especially in Berlin, comment on it freely and not always with malice. The American Forces Network (AFN) radio programs for American troops, for instance, are popular with thousands of English-speaking Germans because they give a truer and more lively picture of American life and culture than any of our pompous Voice of America programs in German.

Young German artists, writers

and intellectuals, like my friends among the contributors to *Das Lot* and its readers, have grown, in the past two or three years, increasingly despondent and cynical. Condemned for twelve years to express only the views of the Nazi state, most of them now find themselves again unable to earn a decent living, especially in Western Berlin, unless they sacrifice every trace of individual taste and thought. They are faced indeed with a choice of three paths, all equally deadly. They may sell their talents to the cultural agencies of Eastern Germany, where a "Socialist realist" whose work is free from any taint of "formalism" can still lead the life of Riley. They may, with luck, yet find a shabbily genteel job as a "collaborationist" in an overstuffed American or British agency. Finally, they may prostitute their talents entirely to the West-German purveyors of scandal and glamor.

If he can land a job with one of the independent organizations that supply newspapers, magazines, or films to the guzzlers of whipped cream and those who fervently hope, some day, to join their ranks in the Café Society of European Recovery, a West-Berlin intellectual is sitting pretty. On his earnings from a ghost-written biography of Goering's widow or a movie-script for a musical starring one of the lovelies who once graced Dr. Goebbels' parties, he may then sun himself all through the summer afternoons on the ter-

race of a luxurious café. Drinking heavily taxed coffee out of a porcelain cup styled to enrapture a 1905 Yorkville *hausfrau*, guzzling imported whipped cream that the impoverished Danes cannot eat but must export for sterling or dollars, smoking untaxed black-market

American cigarettes through a heavy amber holder from behind the Iron Curtain, he will then offer a perfect picture of that "European way of life" that remains the phony ideal of American and German wise guys who can distinguish a silk purse from a sow's ear only by its price.

The Spaghetti Is Lousy

GIORGIO MONICELLI

IF IT IS TRUE, as some people often say, that Italy is the China of Europe, then Milan is indeed the equivalent of Shanghai. In the last century Milan prided itself upon being the "true spiritual capital" of the new nation, but today it wishes to be known for its material accomplishments, the number of its banks, industries, and imitation skyscrapers. At the most crowded hours of the day, when the narrow streets are jammed with automobiles, every good Milanese feels as if he were something of an "American" and looks with scorn at the leisurely "peasants" from the South, whose habits have tainted the city's sober shine.

Milan is convinced of being a "practical place," where people work hard and make money and where macaroni, mandolins, and all that goes with the refrain of

"*O sole mio*" are abhorred more than anywhere else on earth. It's true enough that as long as I've been in Milan I've never eaten a decent plate of spaghetti, and that the sun, at least in the winter months, rarely makes an appearance. But I can't help being amused by the austere enthusiasm with which the Milanese swear that they are Nordics, extol the earnestness of their work, and profess an almost mystical respect for big business and money.

I was struck, soon after my arrival, by the small number of benches set out under the plane trees that border the Corso Sempione, one of Milan's widest and most modern streets. "It seems to me very queer indeed," I said to my native Milanese landlord, "that a city as practical as this one shouldn't make its citizens a little more comfortable. Now in Rome, for in-

stance. . . ." But my complimentary reference to the "practical city" of Milan was canceled by my most unfortunate mention of Rome, which next to Naples is the place that the Milanese dislike most fervently. Shooting me a bitter look and speaking in the hoarse voice that distinguishes him and his fellow-citizens from any other members of the human race, he retorted:

"This isn't Rome. This is a city that means business, this is Milan. Here we have too much work to do to sit on public benches."

It is the unalterable belief of the Milanese that in Naples a million "peasants" eat spaghetti with their hands between a nap and a hold-up, and that in Rome two million bureaucrats, not to mention the foreign diplomatic corps, live at the expense of Milan. "We carry the entire load of Italy on our shoulders," is the sentence most often on the lips of a Milanese *ragionat'* or accountant.

The accountant is a typical figure of the Milan of today, half petty employee and half professional man, something between a bank auditor and a factory manager, a middle-class fellow who aspires to be a business magnate, a Catholic who never goes to church but glories in the history of Christendom and his own progressive views, who doesn't know the difference between an Englishman and an American but has a passionate admiration for both in equal measure. A practical and ef-

ficient fellow, as he is always telling you, one who transacts in one telephone call an amount of business which a southerner couldn't accomplish in a month. It is obvious from his tone of voice that somehow or other he considers himself a glorious Anglo-Saxon, whose superior qualities are lost upon his "peasant" countrymen.

IN REALITY, this ingenuously provincial and optimistically energetic city of Milan is the only place in Italy endowed with a European bourgeois spirit. The Milanese believe in progress and order, in Christianity and social democracy, in Catholicism and Liberalism, in the brotherhood of man and the merits of being wealthy (that is, favored by Heaven), in free enterprise and planned economy. They have faith in the word of their fellows and hope that some day a promise given over the telephone may be just as binding as a signed business contract.

In a nation where Liberalism and Democracy have always had a theoretical rather than a practical value, Milan's, vaguely democratic tradition has set it apart from those southern cities where the influence of the Balkans and the Middle East clearly prevails.

Once the Fascist government was gone, Milan revived its democratic traditions. Whenever public opinion is divided over a political issue of the day, people gather in the vast

square in front of the Cathedral, where they break up into innumerable discussion groups, each one with its own leader. These demonstrations of "democracy in action" are usually marked by a tolerant respect of the most divergent ideas and opinions. Only when there is a dangerous outburst of noise do police jeeps dash like so many crazy toys over the paving-stones and disperse the crowd. In five or six minutes order is restored, and pigeons and photographers resume possession of the square.

NOWADAYS SPORTS arouse more passionate excitement than politics. Like every other Italian city, Milan is madly enthusiastic over soccer, and its two big-league teams, the *Milan* and the *Inter*, have split the million and a half inhabitants into two rival factions. On Sunday evenings, when the crowd spills out of the stadium in the direction of the Cathedral, there are wildly spectacular scenes in the streets. Fans carrying huge flags in their team's colors hold up traffic and force the onlookers to cheer the winner. Blocked automobiles sound off their horns and a clamor of mingled cheers and jeers goes up to the sky. The policemen are fans just like the rest and do more shouting than clearing the way, while pedestrians jam the sidewalks to look on the fist fights engaged between one vehicle and another.

Antonio Greppi, the mayor of Milan, a figure straight out of Tolstoy, is subject to an amount of criticism that he hardly seems to deserve, in view of the fact that he was democratically elected. But even the citizens of this liberal stronghold follow the Italian custom of "taking out" their troubles on some scapegoat or other. Greppi is a Socialist (minus Karl Marx) and a practicing Catholic. The Fascists persecuted him and killed his son. Early in his legal career he became known as a "poor man's lawyer," who pleaded for bicycle thieves without compensation as long as they promised to reform. Malicious tongues had it that this Tolstoyan system resulted in a larger number of stolen bicycles and an increase of thieving in general.

Greppi is a gentleman of the old school and on the side an amateur writer. He writes plays and gives lectures, and every newsreel shows his curly gray head bobbing up and down at some sporting event, funeral, or reception. From time to time the papers come out with an announcement that Greppi has just finished a new play. And the Milanese, who have a taste for the arts but consider them a bit frivolous for the mayor of their city, shake their heads and say in dialect: "*El Greppi el poderia minga faa andaa mej i tram, o mett pussé vespasiani in' sto poer Milan?*" (Couldn't this fellow Greppi speed up the trams or install

some public toilets in this poor old Milan of ours?) Some people go so far as to say that as a lawyer he is a good playwright, as a playwright an excellent mayor, and as a mayor a 200 per cent Catholic. But the Milanese are fond of their mayor, when you come down to it, and he represents them better than they know.

Milan's "skyscrapers" are among its most comic features. Up to the First World War, in spite of the fact that it was not a beautiful city, certain old buildings and aristocratic streets preserved something of the kindly, intimate and yet distinguished air of which Stendhal has left us a description. Later on, in the days of the great novelist, Manzoni, Milan still preserved the same character. The nobility held liberal and anti-Austrian views; good conversation was to be found in the drawing-rooms and a high degree of craftsmanship among the working people. Cultural traditions stemmed from France and ideas followed the pattern of those held by the enlightened, wealthy, upper-middle class all over Europe. The Milanese were too sure of their own civilized qualities to take offense at the name of *Paneropoli* or "Creamtown," which was fastened upon their city by the neurasthenic poet, Foscolo, because of the number of dairy shops along the streets and the abundance of cream. In these days, in spite of its homeliness, Milan was pleasant enough to look at.

But the vulgarizing influence of two World Wars has led to the abandonment of the harmoniously constructed three-story house and the erection of awkward, vertical blocks that serve no practical purpose except to express hostility to Rome. If Rome is the city of museums and ancient monuments, then Milan must show the world that it is an up-to-date industrial metropolis, complete with skyscrapers. But Milan is not, like Manhattan, squeezed in between the Hudson and East Rivers; there are hundreds of square miles in which it can grow and hence no valid reasons for such frantic architectural monstrosities. For the so-called Milanese skyscraper is about as much like the real thing as Mischa Auer is like Rita Hayworth. Just imagine great, smooth, white ten- or twelve-story slabs that look like a cross between a jail and an oversize bathroom. The alternative is a daring sixteen- or eighteen-story thrust upwards, interrupted near the top by some coy, decorative motif which seems to say that this is no crude and elementary creation but a complex blend of the ultra-modern and the Renaissance.

Personally I adore skyscrapers when they are the genuine articles. The nation that first built them unconsciously invented the symbol of a new kind of power and of human capacity to grow in a new direction. The skyscraper is the steel-ribbed

prayer of our epoch, comparable to the Romanesque and Gothic cathedrals of the Middle Ages. But, I repeat, I cannot stomach cheap parodies of the real thing.

Let us come down to earth! Another feature of Milan is the large number of publishing houses, 80 per cent of those in the Italian market. The typical Milanese publisher is corpulent and self-assured, and his prosperity is quite astounding for a country where hardly anyone has ever made a living as a writer. He speaks in a gentle and persuasive voice and shares with an entirely different group, that of Italian artists, the privilege of being half-illiterate. The owners of great printing shops and mass-circulation magazines are for the most part self-made men, who treat books like merchandise and look upon their authors as impractical idiots. The fact that there must be a writer before there can be a merchandiser or publisher of his artistic production never seems to enter their minds. Italian publishers consider themselves philanthropists of the first water and dole out just enough advances to struggling authors to keep them in grateful bondage for the rest of their lives.

The newspaper world and public opinion are both dominated by the great Italian daily of many years standing, the *Corriere della Sera*, which has a circulation of over a million copies. Its political com-

plexion is cautious and austere, pro-government and reactionary in a Jesuitical fashion, and together with the weeklies that are under its control it is the most powerful medium of communication in the country. With the small army of writers and artists attached to its staff, the *Corriere* and its ultra-conservative point of view are just as unhealthy for the narrow-minded moneyed class as is the Communist *Unità* for the workers.

Painters, sculptors, incomprehensible poets, and homosexuals who like to be seen with them all frequent the four or five lugubrious cafés in the vicinity of the Brera Academy, the *Corriere della Sera* and the *Piazza Cavour*, where the building that formerly housed Mussolini's first Fascist paper, the *Popolo d'Italia*, is now the seat of a number of minor publications. The cafés have names like the "Black Cat" and "Sora Titta's Bar," and their walls are plastered with somewhat sickening frescoes reminiscent of the Montmartre of forty years ago. They offer execrable Italian brandy at fifty liras a glass and genuine Scotch whiskey for five hundred, and the names of Picasso and Gauguin echo within them. Here shabbily foppish individuals with a pronounced southern accent make dubious propositions to any male visitors, and angular sculptresses talk proudly in deep bass voices of their sexual deviations.

YES, MY BELOVED old Milan is in the process of decay. Its people of wealth and position cannot see farther than an inch in front of their own noses and would rather have gallows set up in front of the Cathedral than concede the slightest social reform; its "advanced" artists are ready to sell out to vested interests, and the masses of petty employees and workers have no political maturity and do not know what they are really after. Milan's heyday was in that golden age of Europe in general when Shaw was writing *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, when money was based on the gold standard, Italian industry was growing, and people could travel without passports in their pockets. At this time Milan was a railway junction and a commercial center, a miniature Switzerland where comfort and optimism prevailed. Europe lived in the shadow of the kindly moustachios of Edward VII, the German Kaiser, and the Emperor Francis Joseph, and dreamed to the rhythm of Strauss waltzes and popping champagne corks of a future of unlimited progress and prosperity.

Of course all these good things reached Milan with a certain delay, but they did reach it. Veuve Cliquot bubbled just as gaily in the Savini as it did at Maxim's and even left-wing deputies to the parliament ate midnight suppers of pheasants and partridges in truffle sauce. The

ragged and hungry mob of emigrants from the south had not yet come to make the Milanese aware of the economic blight that overhung the rest of their country. Nowadays convivial souls are crowded into huge, glittering bars, lined with chromium and mirrors and lit up by ghostly neon lights, where they are forced to rub elbows and scrape shins, and no cashier can last more than three months without a nervous breakdown.

It is hard to imagine that here there were once comfortable cafés of the kind still to be found in Paris, with three or four big rooms, one after the other, furnished with red plush sofas and candelabra, where people went to take it easy and to talk in subdued voices. Rome, in spite of the fact that it has become more populous than Milan, still has refuges of this kind, but the Milanese remain sceptical on their score. Perhaps they are weighed down by *panettone*, the heavy cake traditionally eaten with sweet white wine, which I must confess always leaves me with heartburn.

Dear, outmoded Milan, these very things are what attach your people to you so strongly that they will never deny you. Greppi or no Greppi, publishers or no publishers, *panettone* or no *panettone*, in some way, "*Milan l'è brutt ma l'è simpatic.*" Ugly as Milan may be, there is something special about it.

THE RIGHT HONORABLE MR. DEAN

Malaprop of Sportscasting

TED SHANE

THEY'RE EVEN makin' a movie of my life," said Dizzy Dean. "They got fifty-eight writers workin' on it, and three actors includin' Dan Dooley is agoin' to play Ol' Diz. They even give Ol' Diz \$50,000 for livin' it!"

He meant "Dan Dailey" — but then Dizzy Dean was never a respecter of personages. In white Texas sombrero, bright yellow sport shirt, and green gabardine slacks, he lolled in the lobby of his midtown New York hotel between telecasts of the New York Yankee home games. A large, ruddy-jawed, handsome, silvering man of forty, he genially included lobbyites, bellboys, and desk clerk in his gabby intimacy.

The story of Jerome Herman "Dizzy" Dean is that of a big, bumptious, ornery, likeable boy who knew he was good, and could prove it. For six noisy, electric years this clowning, gifted athlete strutted across the national scene, making us forget the depression. He almost

turned our national pastime into Disorganized Baseball. He was a Bad Boy, a hillbilly Problem Child — but never in a mean or evil sense. Society had to throw him down, put shoes on him, teach him manners. That took doing, and probably the one person most responsible for doing this was his wife Patricia. "Mom had her hands full," Dizzy readily admits. "It ain't easy to jump a rogue elephant through a small hoop."

The disturbing thing about his bluster was that he made it come true. One afternoon when he was with the St. Louis Cardinals he ambled over to the Boston Braves' dugout before a game, and drawled lazily to the Beantown players: "Don't you fellas worry none about no curves this afternoon. Ol' Diz ain't throwin' none. He's just throwin' fast balls."

Diz kept his word, blazed out a three-hit, 1-0 victory. When someone spoke of bragging, Dizzy snorted: "Braggin'? The way I see

it braggin' is when you ain't got nothin' to back it up."

Baseball washed Dean up at twenty-seven — stilled his mighty arm. But it couldn't still his tongue. Diz became a radio broadcaster. Then in 1950 the New York Yankees hired him to TV their home games at \$30,000 a year. His homely Arkansas argot, his irreverence for the rules of grammar and the airwaves, have made him the pet of the home bleacherite. His Deanisms echo round the land: "Mantle slud into third!" he'd shout. Or "That was a foul ball, folks, and the runners has returned to their respectable bases." Dean never brought Musial up to bat, he got fancy: "There stands Moozell at the plate — he's mighty confidential!" For a finale he urged his listeners: "Don't fail to miss tomorrer's games, folks!"

JEROME HERMAN DEAN was born in three different places on three different dates. "Me and Paul was playin' in Brooklyn one day," he explains, "and the New York papers sent a man over to ask Ol' Diz where he was born, so I tole him Lucas, Arkansas, January 16, 1911. Danged if another reporter don't come and ask me the same. I wasn't agoin' to have their boss bawl them out for both gettin' the same story, so I tole this fella Bond, Mississippi, February 22, which is givin' George Washington a break. Two minutes later I tole the *New York Times*

guy Holdenville, Oklahoma, August 22. They all been nice to Ol' Diz, and I figured they each got a scoop that way."

As befits a man with two careers and three birthplaces, Dizzy acquired two sets of names. Born in a rickety wooden shack on the Arkansas flatlands, the third son of poverty-pinched, migratory sharecroppers, his mother named him Jay Hanna Dean after Jay Gould and Mark Hanna. But when a neighbor's son, Jerome Herman died, little Diz trotted over and to console the father, announced he was taking the boy's name and would make it mean something in the world.

When Diz was three his mother died, and by the time he was six Diz claims he could plow a field with a double-tongued plow. Needed in the fields, Diz was exposed briefly to the Chickalah, Arkansas, schoolhouse. "Went two grades," he reveals. "First was harder than the second, so I quit."

Dean Sr. had been a semi-pro ballplayer, and the entire Dean clan would get in some pitchin' and ketchin' once the day's cotton had been picked. Little Jerome Herman could hit a snake with a rock at forty paces. At twelve he pitched for Spaulding High, near Holdenville — a brilliant ringer, once shutting out Oklahoma City Teacher's College with two hits, striking out fourteen. Little brother Paul played the infield. There was an older

brother, Elmer. One fall the Deans were migrating in two jalopies, caravan style, when a freight train got between the two cars at a crossing. "Darned if we didn't lose Elmer for four years," Diz marvels. "One day Elmer heard about me pitchin' a game on the radio and he come down to Houston to see if it was me. It was me all right."

At nineteen Diz became an assistant meter reader and pitcher for the San Antonio Public Service Company at thirty dollars a week. A scout for the St. Louis Cardinals took one look at his burning fast ball, and signed the embryonic wonder-boy for a \$300 bonus and \$1800 a year. "I never knowed before that you got paid for playin'," Diz says. "It was more money'n I ever earned in my life put together."

Assigned to St. Joseph, Mo., of the Western League, Dizzy made his professional debut by clowning out a 4-3 victory. Introducing himself to each batter, he courteously requested what pitch each preferred, then served it up as hot as a bullet. Swaggering to the batter's box, he collected two hits; ran bases like a jackrabbit; and started a triple play — the first ever to be executed in the league.

He was immediately classified as a Baseball Great — a pitcher with lightning speed, a "thousand" pitches, and built-in baseball instinct. St. Joseph went for him in a big way. The keys of the city were

his — especially automobile keys. A big cigar in his wide grin, in a borrowed car he raced the chief of police through traffic until crowded into the curb and clink. Expansively, Dizzy forgave the chief and talked himself out of the fine.

Since the club paid all bills on the road, Diz became normally confused at home. At one time he was registered at two hotels and the St. Joseph "Y", enabling him and any playboy associates to hit the sack at the nearest handy spot. At month's end he referred all bills to the club treasurer. That they ate up his salary didn't seem to bother Diz. He was always broke.

The front office was unhappily untangling Nature Boy's finances when Diz was summoned up a rung in the Cardinal farm ladder to Houston. He fitted in nicely with the Texas way of life. Wandering into his hotel lobby one morning at 2:00 a.m., long after the ballplayers' curfew, he ran into club president Fred Ankenman. Never at a loss, Diz cried, "I guess me and you will get the devil for this, Mr. Anchorman. If you don't say nothin' about it I won't neither."

NEXT TO GRAPPLE with him was Cardinal manager Gabby Street, a dour, skeptical, ex-World War I sergeant. Diz arrived at "sprang training" in Bradenton, Florida, in 1931, announcing that Cardinal troubles were over for the

year. He'd win thirty for the mother club. When given a chance to exhibit his wares for Branch Rickey and Sam Breadon, the Cardinal brass, he deliberately filled the bases with world champion Athletics, then struck out Simmons, Cochrane and Foxx, baseball's current Murderer's Row, with ten pitched balls.

Rickey was impressed with Dean's pitching but not with his banking habits. Ball clubs provide spring training bed-and-board but no pocket money. Dizzy discovered that checks bought items ex-barefoot boys crave — drink, cigars, shirts and bines. For a time Rickey honored these bits of latex. Then he patiently explained that being with the Cardinals didn't constitute a partnership, and put the Wild Oat on a dollar-a-day allowance.

Diz was expounding in the hotel lobby one evening on owner Sam Breadon — “that penny-pinchin' ol' coot, who oughta be givin' me two dollars instead of one” — when someone tapped him on the shoulder. “Come to my room, Mr. Dean,” the man said. “I'm Sam Breadon.”

Diz disappeared amid shocked anticipation.

Soon he was back, triumphantly waving two one dollar bills. “Got the raise!”

A few days later, however, Mr. Dean found himself on the way back to Houston. It was said he went to keep Gabby Street from going nuts.

At Houston the red carpet was out. Treading it, he spied Patricia Nash, a comely brunette behind the hosiery counter in a shoestore. A week later they were married. Miss Nash vetoed Mr. Dean's proposal that they get tied at home plate in the Houston ball park; smashed a bottle Diz had purchased for a celebration; and ordered him to return a violet-tinted new Hupmobile he had purchased as a wedding present with no down payment. She also loaned him the two dollars for the license.

Diz pitched and won for his new Mom on the wedding day. Mom's first communique read: “Dizzy's got the practical sense on the ballfield. I got it off.”

Jerome Herman became a Cardinal regular in 1932 at \$3000 a year — a standard freshman salary. When his employers began advertising not the Cards vs. the Giants, but Dean vs. the Giants, he discovered that he had a crowd puller (highly underpaid), and it became tougher than ever to bring him to simple justice. He invented the One-Man Strike and the Mid-Season Holdout. He jumped the team in Philadelphia one afternoon and returned to St. Louis. Street wanted him fined, but the Cardinal high command granted him a wage increase instead. When the nation's sport pages delightedly reported the fracas, Dean further cackled: “I heard Rickey tellin' Breadon the publicity I got couldn't have been bought for \$100,000!”

Recognizing no stars excepting himself and those in heaven, Dizzy fogged his pitches by the batters of 1932 for eighteen wins and 191 strikeouts; and in 1933 he won twenty, but by August had so disorganized the Redbirds that manager Gabby Street gave way to Frank Frisch.

Dean affectionately tagged Frisch "the Dutchman," and transferred Street's former headaches to the peppery second-baseman: Diz missed trains, went fishing in "Novus Scofus," entertained lavishly during business hours. Once Dean and several colleagues broke the curfew law. Frisch fined everybody \$100, except Dean, whom he fined \$200. "You're a big shot, Diz," Frisch reasoned. "You're worth double anybody else. That's why I made it twice as big." Dean stalked off, beaming.

The Cardinals of 1934 were the famed Gashouse Gang: Ducky Medwick, Leo Durocher, Rip Collins, Kayo Delancey, and Pepper Martin. All Frisch had to do to control this tobacco-spraying, earthy, baseball-hungry group of mavericks was to control its ringleader, Dean. But by now there were two Deans to contend with. For some time Dizzy had been interrupting his self-flattery with tales of a brother Paul who was even better than himself. To quiet Diz, Rickey dispatched him with a scout to El Campo, Tex., where Paul and Dean Sr. were picking cot-

ton. Diz donned a glove and Paul gave a demonstration. "Where did Paul sign his contract?" Diz inquires. "Right in the middle of that 'ere cotton field."

Paul joined the Cards and was promptly nicknamed "Daffy" by a groping sportswriter. But Paul never did anything daffy: he caught trains, didn't throw his money around, sought advice and took it; he was shy, silent, sweet-tempered.

DIZZY'S NEXT MOVE was to reveal that having made a mistake in his birth date, he had signed a Cardinal contract under age. That made him a free agent to be signed elsewhere for \$50,000 or more.

The entire Dean clan attended the hearing at St. Louis before baseball commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis. Rickey sat sourly, flanked by lawyers. Suddenly there was a flareup; Diz and his father were battling each other. Dizzy had the date wrong. "I oughta know," shouted Dean Sr. "I was there!"

Dizzy shook a long finger at Paw. "I was there too!" he shouted.

The Commissioner found for the Cardinals.

"Aren't you ashamed?" cried Rickey, rushing to Dean.

"Sure am, Mr. Rickey," said Dean, radiantly. "But don't it make a heck of a story!"

Another time Rickey gained the upper hand over Dean. One Sunday Diz flatly refused to work. He'd

been advertised to pitch. As he entered the dugout he heard Branch Sr. call to his son: "Did you get the Mayor on the phone?" Before young Branch could answer, Rickey groaned, "Too bad, too bad!"

Diz stuck his head over the dugout. "Did I hear you say Mayor, Mr. Rickey?"

"The Mayor of Alton is coming down with some millionaires just to see you pitch, Diz," Rickey said. "I tried to head them off—but couldn't. What'll I tell them?"

"Don't tell them nothin'. I'll loosen up!"

Dizzy pitched brilliantly to a group of distinguished-looking gentry settled importantly in the Rickey box. "Dad had asked me to go pick out some spectators who looked like politicians," Branch, Jr., discloses. "Dizzy never found out they were phoney."

Dizzy kept things in an uproar with his clowning. He'd disappear and turn up leading a band in a buzzbee. Once Frisch found him and Martin calf-roping and bulldogging at a rodeo with a game to play next day. Another time Diz lit a fire in front of the dugout and warmed up before it in a blanket, pausing to utter loud warwhoops. In Cincinnati he put a cake of ice on home plate to cool it off from his fast ball. If guests at the team's hotel seemed to be getting head colds, Dean undoubtedly had put sneezing powder in the ventilators.

One evening three workmen with ladders invaded the dignified dining room of Philadelphia's Bellevue Stratford and entirely disrupted the dinner hour by proceeding with plans to renovate the room. Branch Rickey, involved in a salad, found it up around his ears when one of the workmen slammed down hard on his table. The trio then surveyed the kitchen and the barber shop, and finally broke up a Boys' Welfare Banquet in the ballroom, getting into an argument during which the smallest of the threesome floored the largest. In the hullabaloo someone recognized Dizzy Dean on the floor and Pepper Martin as his assailant. A good laugh was had by all. Branch Rickey rushed in to find three of his stars on the speaker's platform, telling all about juvenile delinquency, and how boys will be boys!

DESPITE THE DEANS' thirty-three victories, the Cards were floundering in second place by August twelve, 1934. That day the brothers dropped a doubleheader to the Cubs. But after that the boys really bore down, and on September 21, in a doubleheader against Brooklyn, they narrowly missed what might have been baseball's most fantastic record: two no-hit games in one afternoon by two brothers. Dizzy's extrovertism got in the way.

At the usual pre-game strategy session, Frisch went over batter weaknesses, advising Dizzy where to

pitch to such ball-massagers as Stripp, Cuccinello and Al Lopez. Dizzy, who liked to pitch to a hitter's strength, not his weakness, had an exact opposite idea for each man. Frisch's top began to blow, when Dean interrupted. "You're wastin' your time, Frankie," he stated. "It don't look right for an infielder like you to be tellin' a star like me how to pitch." But two were out in the eighth inning before Brooklyn got its first hit off Diz. In the nightcap Paul entered baseball's hall of fame with a no-hitter, an honor that never fell to Diz. "If I'd knowed Paul was agoin' to do that," he sparkled later, "I'da tried for one myself."

Between the games Diz found time to drop into the Dodger clubhouse for congratulations. His usual habit was to invade the enemy lair unostentatiously and be discovered leaning against a post taking in the strategy meeting. Then he'd offer advice — and amble out.

The Cardinals nosed out the Giants on the last day of the season for the 1934 pennant, Dean pitching. Between them the Deans had accounted for forty-nine wins, Diz for thirty. He'd lost twenty pounds working the last month. Thus he looked on the World Series as his personal party. He asked Grantland Rice to get Frisch to let him pitch the first four games and "get it over real quick."

The World Series with the Detroit

Tigers was rough, going to seven games. Then the Deans, who had won two games apiece and the Series, left on a vaudeville tour.

The name Dizzy Dean had begun at last to take on a golden glow. For his labors of 1934 Diz netted \$13,500, including a \$5000 Series check. He appeared on stage, screen and radio; and loaned his magic name to wearing apparel, playing gear, watches, harmonicas and tobacco. He received \$15,000 for a comic strip plugging a breakfast serial and showing Dizzy foiling train robbers by conking them with a thrown baseball. For \$100 he did a commercial telling how he learned to pitch at Oklahoma Teachers College. "I think I'll be a college boy now," he said.

But the next season the Dean act began to miss fire. All Pittsburgh turned out one day to see His Dizziness pitch. Early in the show he disagreed with an umpire over a third strike, then sulkily turned the game into a farce by lobbing the ball over slow motion. As the Pittsburgh batters teed off on him, the crowd booed and started for the exits. A few weeks later when he whimsically refused to stick even his nose out of the dugout, at an exhibition game in St. Paul, he received the royal razzoo from the city.

Dean shrugged it off, but he couldn't shrug off the commercial repercussions when the big-head stories hit the headlines. Dizzy Dean

harmonicas grew still in the land; Dizzy Dean watches stopped running. Dividends, which had reached \$30,000, began melting away. Despite industrial cares, Diz won twenty-eight games in 1935. "I had a bad year," he winks.

Next year Dizzy signed for \$25,005 — the five dollars making him the highest paid pitcher in both leagues, Lefty Gomez receiving \$25,000. Rickey came on Dizzy, however, surrounded by small fry near a miniature golf course, depressed because he was too broke to invite them in for a round. For Patricia persisted with the two dollar-a-day-diet, and Diz strove desperately to augment it. One afternoon he bet a fan twenty-five cents that he could strike out Vince Di Maggio every time he faced him. Pouring on the leather, he turned the trick three times. Fourth time up Vince hit an easy pop fly to the catcher. "Drop it, drop it!" yelled Dizzy. Then Diz struck out Vince.

By now, however, he showed signs of becoming a good boy. He worked like a horse, appeared at exhibitions to sign autographs, and was Lord Chesterfield himself to umpires. Arbiter George Barr folded his arms one afternoon, saying nothing while Diz politely disputed a pitch. "Why don't you answer my question, Mr. Barr?" Diz finally said.

"I did, Mr. Dean," replied Barr. "I shook my head."

"That's funny," Dean said cour-

teously. "I didn't hear nothin' rattle."

Business, which had been bad for Dean Inc., began to pick up. Diz won twenty-four in 1936; the boos were lost in the cheers again.

DEAN WAS PITCHING in the All Star Game at Washington on July seven, 1937, when a hard line drive caromed off his foot. He stayed in the game. Nobody knows what happened next, but possibly in trying to favor his aching toe he pivoted unnaturally and threw out his arm. He was never the same again. Diz had a broken toe and a sore arm, but was soon back taking his regular turn. He had won twelve and lost one; he won only one more game that season.

Next year Rickey sold Dean to the Chicago Cubs for \$185,000 and three good players. The transaction, known as the Sore Arm Deal, was for years looked on as Rickey's smartest piece of horsetrading.

The Cubs went to work on Dean's arm. Johns Hopkins and the Mayo Clinic peered into it. They even hired a "psychotterist" to convince Diz his troubles were all of the mind.

Dean never won more than a handful of games for the Cubs — but his new owners were more than satisfied. He filled the newspapers and the stands, and more than paid off his investment.

For two more years Diz stuck it out, even accepting a cut in wages.

("That's not a cut, it's a operation!" he said). Sent down to Tulsa, he came back up again, won three and lost three. He decided to quit. "He was out of gas, with a skip in his motor," a sportswriter wept.

But was he out of gas?

In 1941 the Falstaff Brewing Company of St. Louis was looking for someone to broadcast games from Sportsman's Park. Dean was suggested and he got the job.

Diz was an instant wow. He knew baseball and could curve a phrase as he had formerly curved a horsehide. His broadcasts featured salty humor, misshapen English, fractured syntax, high spirits and occasional bursts of song. Added to all this was a strong sense of home-town loyalty. Sponsors demand strict neutrality during a sportscast, lest they offend the purchasing power of the opposing listener. Diz would have none of this. He rooted into the microphone like any fan.

His folksy Americana had a poetic tang. A player was "out by a heifer step." "That Mize is so big he could go bear huntin' with a switch." A fly ball was a "tall can of corn" for the fielder. Umpires were "humpty-dumpties" or "three blind mice."

His honest yearnings to see his former team win would cause him to cover his eyes when disaster on the field threatened. One day he caught the opposition's signals. He leaned over the rail of the broadcast booth and bellowed through cupped hands

heard round the park: "Hey, wake up fellas, watch this guy. The old hit-and-run is on!"

DEAN GRAMMAR began tainting the schoolhalls of four mid-western states. Millions of dollars had been spent to eliminate "ain't" from the national vocabulary, and here was a hillbilly putting it back. When moppets started conjugating the verbs "slid, slud, slewed," and "throw, throwed, throwed," the schoolteachers rose in wrath. They complained to the sponsors.

When the fight was carried to the FCC, Diz exploded: "They don't like it when I say Country Slaughter slud into second. What do they want me to say — slidded? Folks from my part of the country understand what I say. I can learn you which is a ball or a strike, and vice visa."

The *Saturday Review of Literature* entered the fray, siding with Diz, praising the vigor of his barefoot-boy prose. One Sunday afternoon Dean addressed the schoolteachers. "All I kin say is I believe in a education," he said emotionally. "I wished I coulda got me one. But my mother died when I was three and I had to chop cotton to get me some red beans, cornbread and sowbelly. If I talk like this it's the only way I know."

This reached the schoolma'ams' hearts; thousands of letters poured in. "It was agreed them teachers would learn them kids English,"

said Dean, "and I would learn them baseball."

In 1950 he switched his rich baritone to the New York Yankees' TV broadcasts. The TV screen revealed the large spellbinding Dean personality and "Spart." ("Spart," he once pointed out, "is like pep and gump-tion, like the Spart of St. Louis that Lindbergh flowed to You-rope in.")

Today, at forty, the rambunctious cottonpicker of yesteryear shows signs of becoming an ivied institution. He owns a Texas ranch where he breeds Hereford white-faces, naming the bulls after himself. A tenant farmer sharecrops on "a two-third for himself, one-third for Dean plan." "My father got the opposite," Diz says. Dizzy admits he's a sharp cattle trader: "Learned it from the sharpest they is — Mr. Rickey!"

The Dizzy Deans are childless; but Brother Paul, now owner-manager of the Clovis, N. M., Class C team, has a growing boy who is currently knocking the mitts off high-school catchers' hands. He is the apple of Dizzy's eye, and his career is being closely watched. He's forbidden to throw anything but fast balls. "Throwin' curves is unnatural," lectures Diz, "and a growin' boy is like a tree. Bend a tree the wrong way and it'll grow up crooked. Curves spoil more young pitchers than them big bonuses they give nowadays."

Dizzy appears at times on Bob Trout's "Who Said That?" program, on which such cultural giants as John Cameron Swazey, Quentin Reynolds and "Dean" H. V. Kaltenborn identify the source of current quotations. In honor of Dizzy's debut on the show, Kaltenborn was juggling three baseballs.

"Evenin', Mr. Kattenbone," said Dizzy. (He has always had trouble remembering names.)

Kaltenborn dropped the balls.

At the end of the show Dizzy said in all sincere admiration, "I studied the dictionary and inseedopeedia all week for this program, but I ain't recognized a sangle word you said, Mr. Cottonbarn."

Said Mr. Kaltenborn, "Mr. Bean, we are even. I haven't recognized a single one of yours, either."

Dean has since frozen the name at "Cattlebaum." Only the other evening in rebuttal to Mr. K's weighty formula on how to handle Russ-see-yah, Dizzy opined brightly: "I don't agree with what you said, Mr. Cattlebaum. My idee is more like this. I'd get me a buncha bats and balls, and sneak me a coupla umpires and learn them kids behind that Iron Curtain how to tote a bat and play baseball instead of totin' a rifle. And if Joe Stallion knowed how much money they was in the concessions at a ball park, he'd get outta politics and get in a honest business."

Boiled Engrams

AN
ELEGY
TO
DIANETICS

Willard
Beecher

and

Calder
Willingham

IN MAY OF last year, from the modest little town of Elizabeth, New Jersey, came a voice that promised complete salvation for mankind on this earth. That in itself is nothing new, but this particular voice was a powerful roar, worth at least a footnote in any account of our troubled age. It was the voice of a man by the name of L. Ron Hubbard. Until this moment, Hubbard had been known as a writer of science fiction fantasies. But now, after fifteen years of intense study, he had created *Dianetics*, a new science of the mind.

The person has not been born who can accuse L. Ron Hubbard of false modesty. The opening sentence of his book, which was a best-seller for many weeks, has been quoted before, but it can be quoted again. Let the reader laugh and shake his head, or chill to the implications that can be drawn from the success of a work that begins in such a manner as this: "The creation of Dianetics is a milestone for man comparable to his discovery of fire, and superior to his invention of the wheel and the arch." Why is fire more important than Dianetics, you are tempted to ask, but of course Hubbard doesn't actually say that fire *is* better, it's just comparable.

Specifically, what did Hubbard promise? It can be summed up readily. His new science of the mind, Dianetics, was a sure cure for everyone's mental ills. And not only was

it a sure thing; the treatment was also delightfully simple. It didn't take a lot of money, or prolonged training. Any two people willing to study the master's book for a few days and work together in the prescribed manner could be saved.

If one followed the Dianetics code carefully, one would end up a Clear. Once a Clear, there would be no more complexes, anxieties, or fears. Anxiety being virtually universal today, it was to be expected that such a proposition would have universal appeal.

The interesting thing is the raiment with which Hubbard has clothed his proposition, and this raiment we will soon consider, after noting once again that the proposition is absolute. There are no qualifications. No buts and ifs. None whatever. Let us hypothesize a hopeless schizophrenic, drifting moodily off the Jersey coast in a sun-kissed orange crate. — No matter! Dianetics can take care of this character, and get him back on dry land. "Dianetics is an exact science," proclaims the voice, "and its application is on the order of, but simpler than, engineering. . . . The Clear, the goal of Dianetic Therapy, can be created from psychotic, neurotic, deranged, criminal or normal people if they have organically sound nervous systems." Mary Baker Eddy at her best never spoke of such complete salvation this side of the grave, and other saviors, by

comparison, are vending buggy whips in a motor age.

The news of Dianetics was first brought to the world through the pages of *Astounding Science Fiction*, a pulp magazine devoted to fantastic stories based (more or less) on scientific knowledge. The editor of this magazine was completely convinced of the cosmic import of Dianetics, yet he felt constrained to announce, in an introductory editorial, that Dianetics is "not a hoax, joke, or anything but a direct, clear statement of a totally new thesis." But perhaps some readers would have wondered, even despite this, were it not for Hubbard's total self-assurance.

However, let us pause. When Jesus was alive, people often asked each other, "What good can come out of Nazareth?" Time has proved that Nazareth and Bethlehem have done very well by the human race, so why couldn't Elizabeth, New Jersey, and a pulp magazine be the humble origin of another great teacher? How could Hubbard be so *sure*, it might be asked, unless he has absolute proof of the validity of his claims? After all, fifteen years of work have gone into the discovery of this new science of the mind. Tests have been made on several hundred people, psychotics included, and the new science has been sanctioned by a member of the medical profession, a Dr. Joseph A. Winters.

In any case, science fiction readers (the original nucleus of the present-day Dianetics cult) were convinced immediately, and the stampede to Elizabeth was in full gallop even before the book itself came out. The eager faithful rushed out to place orders for the book weeks ahead of publication date, and then when it did appear they spread the word around with passion and fervor. *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* became a best-seller overnight. What happened then is now history.

Like a prairie fire fanned by a high wind, the new science of the mind leapt west as far as P.O. Box 5261, Honolulu, as revealed in the *Dianetics Auditor's Bulletin* of July-August, 1950. Dianetics became the rage in Hollywood; the masterwork can still be found on the leather-covered upholstery of fish-tail Cadillac convertibles.

In the conservative East, Dianetics Auditors set up their shingles (still up, at the last report) on Park Avenue. Hubbard dashed madly from coast to coast giving demonstrations, very much like the General who heard the bugle blow, and mounted his horse and rode wildly in all directions. In fact, Hubbard has been so busy that he has had no time to become a clear himself.

Exactly what was it that aroused such enthusiasm in sophisticated America? Why did people listen? What happened? No one could hope

to do justice to the scope of such questions without writing a historical analysis of our times, but a description of this new "science of the mind" can be given, and a few criticisms can be made of it. A year has passed, Dianetics is still flourishing, and the time is ripe for a summing up.

THE MIND," says L. Ron Hubbard, "is an inherently perfect calculator," and it is only when the "exterior world gets 'interior' and causes 'aberrations' that we get into the human difficulties so familiar to all of us." In short, psychological troubles are not our responsibility at all; neurosis is a cinder in the eye of the mind.

Hubbard compares the human mind to a new invention known as the Electric Brain or Electronic Calculator. This machine can make the most abstruse calculations without error, granted there are no "soldered-in cross circuits" or "held down numbers." The machine can make errors only if the mechanism itself breaks down.

What other psychological practitioners might call "the conscious

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mind" or "awareness," Hubbard calls "the Analytical Mind." Every perception observed in a lifetime is to be found in "the memory-banks" of the mind. Hubbard insists that "there is no inaccuracy in these banks." These memory-banks have a *recording* of every scrap of our past experience. The recordings are a kind of superior motion picture film, with sound, color, sight or visualization, and tactile and olfactory sensibilities. Thus far, there is no place for an aberration to exist. God is in his heaven and all is right with the human mind.

But the serpent, according to Hubbard, is contained, or rather, coiled up, in the word "unconsciousness." All aberrations of the mind are the result of things that get "soldered into" the mind when it is "not conscious." The source of these soldered-in contacts is *pain*. Now, pain is a vulgar four-letter word in Dianetics, rather than a biological plus to aid survival. The perfect calculator never misses a trick, sees all and remembers all — until a little smidgin of pain comes along, and then, like an overload of electric current on a flat iron, the Analytical Mind blows a fuse and kicks out of circuit. Thus a human being can be compared to a badly wired rooming house where the lights are always going out.

Now, what happens when the lights go out? Nature has provided for that emergency, says Hubbard.

The *Reactive Mind* takes over at such moments. The Reactive Mind behaves much like a device that will answer the telephone when no one is at home. It is a tape-recorder plugged into the circuit. Any nonsense babbled into the phone is faithfully given back when the owner returns. The first whiff of pain, the circuit of the Reactive Mind "solders in" on the Analytical Mind and henceforth louses up the broadcast, and this is what all our troubles come from.

The reader must bear with us if we mix metaphors or invent a few of our own. That is the way of Dianetics. It is a very metaphorical science, and unless your imagination has a two-way stretch, you cannot possibly understand it. And don't let common sense get in your way, either. One of the things that you must accept is that the recordings in the Reactive bank go back as far as twenty-four hours after conception. But some disciples recall memories twenty-four hours *before* conception! (This has all kinds of dramatic possibilities, not the least of which would be a memoir entitled, "My Struggle to Fertilize Myself.")

Pain-memories, the root of all evil in Dianetics, are called *engrams*. This is what us neurotics are broadcasting. Now let's look into this. According to Hubbard, virtually every pregnant woman has hoped for, or attempted, an abortion at

some time or other. This causes the poor, defenseless foetus to writhe in shame and agony. His humiliation is at the apex if, after birth, he is called "Junior" after the father, and every nasty crack his mother made about the old man during pregnancy is recorded by Junior's Reactive Mind. The poor foetus thinks his mother is talking about *him*, instead of Pop, and as a result of this natural misunderstanding is "pained" into unconsciousness and kicks off out of circuit. It is quite a shock to the poor little fellow, and therefore, is it surprising that, when he grows up, he doesn't have sense enough to pound sand in a rat-hole? That is, unless he has been exposed to Dianetic therapy.

HOW CAN ANYONE hope to become a Clear, and be released of all such soldered-in currents, especially pre-natal humiliations, if they get soldered-in when we're unconscious with pain? This is where the Dianetics un-soldering iron comes into the picture. Hubbard found that if you employ "Dianetic Reverie," you can get into the Reactive Mind easily. Two people must work together, one acting as "Auditor" to the other. The subject lies down. The Auditor does not speak to him at all; his remarks and questions are directed to a File Clerk, who is in charge of the filing system in the Reactive Mind. All engrams are recorded *on*

a time track, and the file clerk runs back and forth along this track lickity-split, picking off any engram demanded of him by the Auditor.

The Auditor commands the file clerk to bring up an engram associated with a painful experience in the subject's past. Then the subject is ordered to re-experience the situation, with sound effects. This is done over and over again, until all the pain has "boiled off." At that happy moment, the file clerk grabs the hot, smoking engram off the griddle, and re-files it in the Analytical Mind. Then, *mirabile dictu*, it will never cause trouble again!

Very neat. The only catch is that each and every engram must be dug up one at a time and "boiled off" or smoked on the griddle for a while before the subject can become that flawless type known as a Clear. The most important engram to be reached is the very first one, which is called Basic-Basic. Once Basic-Basic is re-filed, then all subsequent engrams are more easily unlocked and re-filed. First you go down the time track to Basic-Basic, then you turn around and come back to the present, and then back down the track, and so on.

How do people behave in Dianetic Reverie? Hubbard insists that Dianetic Reverie is not a hypnotic trance, but the same thing as being awake with one's eyes closed. The individual is supposed to be fully aware of what he's doing,

and if he chooses he can come out of it whenever he wishes. Actually, Dianetic Reverie may or may not be a degree of hypnosis, depending on what we mean by that word, but it is surely allied with a very strong will-to-believe on the part of the patient. The individual is urged to read the book repeatedly before his first session; if he is sufficiently impressed by Hubbard's jargon, even one reading is enough to make visions of sugar plums dance through his head. To the convinced soul, it is perfectly natural that the first Dianetic session would be as exciting as the night before Christmas in an Orphan's Home. Every pore is open to suggestion. This is an established capacity of the human mind, and in such a state, the patient, suffused with the glow of the assurances he has gotten from the book, harkens to the probing of the Auditor, and lo, he "discovers" just those phenomena that he is expected to find. It has been happening in Africa for many years with gourds and masks.

Hubbard's book assures us that no one can "erase his engrams" until he has gone back to Basic-Basic — that first experience of pain after conception. All subsequent aberrations are, in effect, chain-linked to this. Since Basic-Basic is pre-natal, the individual must manage to foment within himself sensations and experiences from this period of development. Suggested "terrifying experiences" are: (1) the times when

Mother cheated on Father with the ice man, (2) attempted abortions via a knitting needle, and (3) the dreadful rumbling of gas in Mother's intestines. According to Hubbard, no matter how horrifying the ice man is, and no matter how fearful and eldritch the thunderous rumbles of gas, the sheer ultimate in pain and insult stems from Ma's unsuccessful attempts to abort Junior with a knitting needle. The reader may not believe it, but practically every person who undergoes Dianetic therapy recaptures at some time or other the memory of an attempted abortion with a knitting needle.

NOW BEFORE bidding the reader and Dianetics farewell, let us peer briefly at a Dianetics Session in action. Naturally, the behavior of an individual during reverie can only vary with the degree of suggestibility, if we are correct in assuming that a three-month old foetus can't distinguish between Paw and the delivery boy. But some patients re-live their harrowing foetal experiences without much melodrama. Others, however, let us say the more uncritical and suggestible individuals, dramatize their painful experiences with a passion that would put Bernhardt to shame. If you could roll together the agony of suspense in the *Perils of Pauline*, the tragedy of *Oedipus Rex*, the fury of Madame Defarge at the guillo-

tine, and the horror of chains clanking in a damp, dark cellar, still you would be far removed from such a scene.

As the patient approaches the traumatic engram, convulsive seizures begin to pick at his muscles like invisible birds on a scrap heap. These unrelated twitchings somehow merge together into spasms that cause the legs and arms to toss at random, hither and yon. Soon the whole body is caught in a violent contraction. It becomes a writhing foetus, with knees and chin together, rolling from side to side in desperation, in order to escape the invisible stabs of the knitting needle. The poor beset thing whimpers like a puppy, and sudden bursts of energy erupt into violent movements, as the body lunges here and there and the deadly knitting needle strikes its mark again and again. Then finally the whimpering turns into wild sobbing, and now at last . . . there is Hope.

The Auditor, meanwhile, sits beside the patient with a detached air. The exhibition doesn't faze him in the least. His job is to see that the subject runs through this drama over and over again, until boredom becomes a greater pain than the original one. At this point, the subject usually laughs hilariously. Then the Auditor can assume that the engram will cause no more trouble; it has been removed.

Some subjects go into their acts

with such fervor that even the most blasé Auditor cannot take it at one sitting. At such times, the Auditor decides to bring the subject up for air. At a simple command from the Auditor, the erstwhile tragedian puts aside the act, just as a child parks the gum under the top of the dinner table. He sits up, and at this point it is customary for him and the Auditor to smoke a cigarette together. As they grind out the butts, each goes back to work. The transition from sobriety to high-pitched emotion makes one feel he can't even trust his own banker. These sessions are usually two hours long. By that time, even the engrams are bored, and the file clerk has fallen arches from running along the time track.

IS THERE ANY reason to believe that this ritual will do any good? The answer is yes, and no. People in deep psychological distress suffer most from a feeling of terror at being cut off from life; human relationships appear to them impossible and frightening. The close relationship between the two people who "audit" each other can become a bridge from the isolated person to the outside world. The person gets encouragement from another, no matter what kind, and thus achieves a feeling of connectedness with other people, and consequently succeeds where he has previously failed. At the root of all neurosis, and all

neurotic symptoms, is social isolation. (Alcoholics Anonymous operates unknowingly but nevertheless effectively on this premise.)

Whether Dianetics, on the other hand, can do serious damage, is doubtful but not proven. Recently, *The New York Daily News* reported a murder-suicide of a Dianetics "professor" and his wife. She was a divorced woman. After the marriage, she began to pine for the child of her first marriage, and she attempted suicide several times. Her new husband took her to psychiatrists, but they didn't help her. So he studied Dianetics, and became her auditor. It seemed that she was improving, but one day she bought a gun and killed him and herself. All that really can be said about this is that neither psychiatry nor Dianetics helped these unfortunate people, and that in this case, Dianetics did not measure up to the promises of its frenetic founder.

As for Hubbard himself, his wife has sued him for a divorce, and it may be that there is a grain or two of truth in her charges. She has accused him of bigamy, cruelty, and "systematic torture," and also of being a "paranoid schizophrenic."

One further point can be considered: the question of psychosomatic illness. Hubbard says flatly that "Dianetics will help the reader to eliminate any psychosomatic illness." No psychiatrist is encouraged or flattered if a patient gives up a

psychosomatic symptom after the first visit. These manifestations are only the organs of the body revealing the distress of the soul. If the patient happens to feel that the psychiatrist is a capable fellow upon whom he can safely lean, he relaxes and decides to allow the psychiatrist to carry his responsibilities for him. He then rewards his therapist by swiftly recovering from the symptom. But when he finds later on that he will have to carry his own burden and finally resolve his own conflict, he retaliates against the "cruel" therapist by reviving the old symptom and perhaps two or three others.

Psychotherapy is a wild bird that has not been caged by any technique to date, not even by Dianetics. Thus far, there is no reason to believe that Dianetics has approached Hubbard's wild assertions, or that it ever will. As one thoughtful critic says, "All that is good about it is not new, and all that is new about it is not good." This has been said before, but it is still a mouthful, especially when applied to Dianetics. Dianetics is actually a sort of hasty pudding made up of ideas taken bald-faced from Freudian psychology, Cybernetics, engineering in general, and flavored liberally with a Chutney sauce of pseudo-scientific verbiage, analogy, metaphor, and the clichés of science fiction fantasy itself. It looks as if those epochal inventions, the wheel and the arch, are in no danger.



HOLLYWOOD CATERERS TO THE MIDDLE CLASS

An Appraisal of Metro-Goldwyn Mayer

WILLIAM POSTER

NO MATTER HOW carefully most of the people who have written about films have tried to judge them in terms of themselves, they have rarely been able to avoid carrying over concepts and standards borrowed from the other arts. The vocabulary of criticism is derived from painting, literature, drama, and music, and when it is applied to movies it is often as inappropriate as ballet terminology would be in the description of a basketball game.

A movie can have a plot that would not pass muster in the lowest pulp magazine, ideas that a retarded high school freshman would sneer at, and nevertheless, through superior playing, directing, and photography, emerge as a cinematic spectacle of high quality.

Probably the most remarkable contrast of this kind I can recall was an MGM picture called *Killer McCoy*. It was based on a story dredged up from the Frank Merri-

well days and had dialogue of similar quality, but through adroit and varied shooting and the spectacular miming of James Dunn and Mickey Rooney it turned out to be a haunting, subtle movie. It was, in fact, about the only picture I remember in which Rooney was given a chance to use his fantastic talents freely, in which he wasn't slightly miscast or misdirected, sentimentalized or caricatured. The actual poverty of the story functioned to give Rooney more freedom, to let him project a vivid screen image of a changeling of the modern world, a wistful, punching, jiggling gnome skipping across grimy streets and interiors like a flat stone on water.

Compared to movies of the Hollywood variety, the other arts seem remote, individualistic, hothouse products, conceived and executed at a certain distance from life and responded to in the same way. Movies seem to grow out of the walls and floors, a myriad, dense foliage, dripping blood, sex, and tears, creeping into every corner of life and becoming inextricably bound up with it. Who knows, at this point, if the movies have recorded the ways in which we talk, fight, and make love or if they have created them? For good or ill, the movies and other mass media have turned the modern world into a hall of mirrors in which it is impossible to separate reality from its images. We are all probably born, these days,

looking a bit like Baby Leroy and we will doubtless end up like Lionel Barrymore or Charles Coburn.

MOVIES ARE, then, a collective art, intimately related to the dreams, ambitions, and frustrations of society in a way in which scarcely any other art has been in Western civilization. No other art is subject to such direct pressures from the audience, and the most elementary fairness to the people who make movies requires that critics take these pressures into account. Pictures are also a collective enterprise in a sense which is rarely understood because we are so accustomed to the individualistic nature of other arts. The big Hollywood studios with their complex financial structures, networks of executives, producers, distribution and publicity men play a powerful role in the making of films. The individual talents that go into pictures, unique as they may be, are often raised from seedlings by the studios, nurtured and pruned to fit a specific style and policy. No matter where they go, some never shake off the original studio brand.

During its twenty-seven years of existence, the single most powerful influence on Hollywood movie-making has been that of the Metro-Goldwyn Mayer company, which is at once the richest studio and the one with the most definite, forceful policy. It is the one company which never seems to be carried along by

fashions but always has tended to engineer them and, frequently, to resist them. While it is by no means the most typical Hollywood company, it has always been the most essential, with something of the sedate, big-time status within the industry that U. S. Steel or *The New York Times* have in their fields. MGM also has had the advantage of a legend generated from within and still functioning to give the company an impetus from inside. The legend is that of Irving Thalberg, the "boy wonder" of Hollywood who died at the age of thirty-seven and served as the model for the romantic, ill-fated executive of Scott Fitzgerald's *The Last Tycoon*. Many people claim that Thalberg did more to modernize movie-making than any other single individual.

The MGM combine sprang into existence chiefly as the result of the demand of Marcus Loew for better pictures to exhibit in his chain of theatres. Louis B. Mayer had also been a New England theatre owner who started making movies in New Jersey and switched to Hollywood in 1909. When the MGM merger took place in 1924, the company took over the huge Goldwyn Studio in Culver City which had witnessed the activities of such silent notables as D. W. Griffith and Mack Sennett, the leaps and bounds of Doug Fairbanks and the two-gun shooting of hatchet-faced William S. Hart, the inimitable progenitor of

Gary Cooper and Randolph Scott.

Mayer took over MGM production and brought with him young Thalberg, who had been functioning as secretary at Universal Pictures. Together, they set in motion new policies which helped make MGM the leading power in Hollywood. By 1949 the studio had grown to be a city in itself, spreading over 178 acres containing everything from a private zoo to a schoolhouse for precocious stars. Valued at over \$200,000,000, the studio employs five thousand people and uses thirty-six glassed-in stages to turn out some thirty-five pictures a year at an average cost of \$1,650,000. For diversion and relief from the strains of cinema competition, MGM toys with such properties as record companies and radio stations.

After Thalberg died, Mayer was probably most responsible for directing the companies and he fed the public, it has been said, on a relentless diet of "dogs, babies, sentiment, and sex." But the Thalberg myth continued to haunt the company and so did the hope that someone would eventually turn up to fill his shoes. In 1949, his current counterpart, the relatively youthful Dore Schary, was made executive vice-president in charge of production. A renewed vigor and new ideas were displayed in the MGM output, with pleasing results at the box-office. Schary was hailed as a success and today, in a very different

era, holds a position in Hollywood not too dissimilar from that once held by the talented Thalberg.

From Thalberg to Scharly, MGM has had a fairly continuous development, either through a continuity of tradition, secondary personnel, or because its huge organization and financial needs generate a certain kind of movie-making. In the early days, Thalberg and Mayer probably did more than anyone else to give the star system a permanent franchise in Hollywood. They felt that the Hollywood commodity most people were interested in was personalities, and they proceeded to spend a vast amount of money creating and nurturing them. They came up early with such notables as Lon Chaney, John Gilbert, Ramon Navarro, Greta Garbo, and Joan Crawford. During the Thirties, Clark Gable, Jean Harlow, Spencer Tracy, and others came into prominence and later, Robert Taylor, Lana Turner, Van Johnson, Katherine Grayson, Ava Gardner, etc.

To my mind, MGM stars have a great deal in common. They seem to be the result of innumerable popularity polls and laboratory tests. They fit nearly any kind of picture and are built for long wear. They aren't regional types and it is difficult to associate them with any particular class of society. On the credit side, they all have a certain dignity, health, and robustness. On the debit side, they all have a certain

humorlessness in common and are a bit inflexible and wooden as actors. Geared to a huge national and international box-office, they lack the characteristics which endear them to some sections of the populace while alienating others, like, for example, James Cagney, Gary Cooper, John Garfield, Bette Davis, and Rosalind Russell. And MGM has yet to produce, I would say, a really top-notch clown or comedienne.

IT WAS PROBABLY Thalberg, too, who first made movies studio affairs, carefully gone over by top executives, checked and rechecked for flaws, and who instituted the custom of spending money in awesome quantities to eliminate defects. Immediately after coming to MGM, Thalberg shocked the industry by tossing out hundreds of expensive feet of *Ben Hur* and reshooting the picture in even costlier style with a new leading man, Ramon Navarro. The picture was an outstanding success, grossing some ten million dollars. Ever since, MGM has been more or less committed to the idea that you make money by sparing no expense. Indeed Metro has scrapped, discarded, cut, and remade so many films that some Hollywood wit once dubbed the Culver City lot "the Valley of Retakes." Scharly has maintained the tradition, albeit with a few new wrinkles. Trying to add efficiency to perfectionism, Scharly goes in for

intensive cast-reading and rehearsals before actual shooting, so that many of the difficulties which are solved at great cost when a film is in the shooting stage may be taken care of in advance. But MGM still has enough of the old flair for a lavish gamble to have underway at the moment what is probably the most expensive movie ever made, *Quo Vadis*, a historic epic very much in the *Ben Hur* tradition. The spirit of Thalberg apparently still lives on but whether the public will support it with its earlier generosity remains to be seen.

Whatever the method, whether because they can use more money or have more ability at it, MGM has always been spectacularly successful in pleasing that unreliable beast, the public. Of course, it has taken plenty of sweat and anxiety and it sometimes seems that the people who get paid for doing the worrying are getting a little tired of working by sheer instinct and judgment. There is too much involved to let people place their trust in simple human powers. A friend of mine who teaches design recently had an engineer-student ask him: "Why isn't there some combination of colors that would simply make things so desirable that everybody would buy them?" It occurred to my friend that his student had put into words the unexpressed wish of nearly every American business executive.

MGM, too, seems inclined these

days to bolster up creative ability and personal guesswork with the techniques of Applied Science. It finances an outfit known as the Motion Picture Research Bureau, headed by Leo F. Handel, who published a book last year describing his operations and setting forth his conclusions. The road to sure-fire movies, he is convinced, is paved with polls, studies, and such fiendish devices as laugh and applause meters, hidden microphones, and cameras. He waxes almost rhapsodic when he describes a new device still in the experimental stage, "a small electronic gadget to record the spectator's heartbeat and rate of breathing as scenes of love, violence, and excitement unfold upon the screen."

Until the millennium arrives, when all criticism will probably be done by electrocardiograph, I would like to offer some merely personal responses to the MGM parade. To begin with, I discover, by going through the files, that I simply went ahead and missed nearly every big, successful MGM production in the Forties. I did not see *The White Cliffs of Dover*, *Mrs. Miniver*, *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*, *Random Harvest*, and other such "heart-warming" epics. I guess I did not want my heart warmed. I spent most of my movie-time watching the antics of Bogart, Cagney, Randolph Scott, John Wayne, Bob Hope. Of course, I was a young and not very sentimental bachelor in those days and the lone male doesn't

constitute the most profitable type of audience. Mr. Handel, after studying movie audiences, reached the conclusion that women more often than men decided that the couple should take in a movie and that men are more apt to go alone than women. It is obviously sounder fiscal policy to aim your movies at the women; if you hit the target you get two admissions instead of one. It seems to me that MGM must have had at least an instinctive awareness of this fact all along, which is why for ten years I missed most of their movies. I can't imagine, for that matter, any lone American male dropping casually in to see *Mrs. Miniver*.

I am now no longer a bachelor but my wife comes from a family connected with the stage and shares Mr. G. J. Nathan's well-known distaste for motion pictures. Nevertheless during the last year or two, partly as the result of writing about pictures, I have seen some twenty-odd MGM films, including nearly all the big ones, despite the fact that it practically makes me blush to be seen entering a theatre with a title like *Father's Little Dividend* glaring nakedly from the marquee.

The total effect of MGM movies, as I think back about them, is far from an unpleasant one as compared with equal blocks of films from other studios. They rarely put out a film that I would regard as top-notch entertainment, but they never sink

into the depths of preposterous vulgarity that some of the other companies frequently wallow in. Technically, too, it still puts out the best-made, if not the most original or experimental, films issuing out of Hollywood. "Technically" is often a mystifying term in the arts, but I mean something relatively simple by it.

For one thing, MGM usually puts out a carefully made, visually handsome, incident-packed movie that makes you feel as if you've seen something substantial even if you don't particularly like what you've seen. Take a Metro picture that lasts an hour and fifteen minutes and one by another studio lasting approximately the same time. If the picture by the other company happens to be a good one, it is liable to seem abruptly truncated and leave you just a bit dissatisfied; if it is a bad one it is liable to seem endless. A Metro picture, good or bad, usually manages to seem just the right length, to hold your attention to the full extent of your powers of response whether you like what you are responding to or not.

A TYPICAL EXAMPLE of recent MGM movie-making is the very popular *Father's Little Dividend*, which I found annoying in both its subject matter and treatment. It is, however, impossible to deny the immense showmanship and skill with which it is put over. *Father's*

Little Dividend is a small masterpiece of movie-making. In it, a difficult domestic subject that doesn't allow much scope to the cameras is cleverly elaborated and stretched into a host of varied episodes, each one of which is worked for all it's worth. The transitions between them are managed so smoothly that you never notice that you are being led from house to house, room to room, through streets, parks, a hospital and police station in an eye-diverting, entertaining fashion. Even the difficult business of making time lapse is done through a series of little episodes that keep the action going, rather than through such hoary devices as self-exfoliating calendars.

It is not a very long picture, yet if you care to stop to think about the number of scenes, incidents, and people packed neatly into it, is amazing. To sum it up, it gives you a maximum of varied action and characterization with remarkable clarity, perfect pace, and a certain all-over handsomeness in the people, furnishings, and scenes.

As supposedly genial, funny pictures of American family life, however, *Father's Little Dividend*, and its predecessor, *The Father of the Bride*, are far from successful. It is not merely the fault of the individuals, but is also due to the perpetuation of a certain traditional approach within the company. Thalberg and Mayer both seem to have

begun by getting solidly behind the virtues and morality of the middle class of America and pushing them for all they were worth. The result has been, as these attitudes have congealed, that nearly all the pictures of the studio suffer from an oppressive piety that keeps them close to the Johnson code but remote from contemporary life, even for the purposes of comedy. And middle-class, American domestic life is habitually viewed by MGM as a kind of earthly paradise in which the American people as a whole participate.

Go for Broke, another recent release, likewise has the typical MGM virtues and defects. It is one of the very few pictures which Mr. Schary has seen fit to put his name to. It works very hard to persuade the audience that Japanese-Americans can be good citizens and soldiers and that we should have proper democratic attitudes toward them. The truth of its thesis is undeniable and if it actually succeeded in convincing people I suppose it would perform a public service. The majority of the New York audience among whom I saw it were undoubtedly both entertained by the picture and affected by its message. But the average New Yorker is fairly free of prejudice against people of another color to begin with and has so little intimate contact with Nisei that he can afford to indulge in generous feelings toward them in a theatre. Whether

the picture could actually change the mind of a really prejudiced person is a horse of a different shade. Frankly, I don't think so. For one thing, the Nisei regiment portrayed in the picture is composed of such uniformly lovable, nice-looking, brave, wise, idealistic, young men that its counterpart could not be found in any army on this planet, whether white, black, yellow, red, or green. The dialogue matches the characterization in authenticity.

Go for Broke is redeemed for me somewhat by the fact that its desire to be kind-hearted seems to be genuine but weakened by a timidity of almost pathologic proportions. The makers are not only anxious to spread kindness and tolerance but are so averse to their opposites that they cannot bear to put anybody on the screen who is not good and noble enough to be canonized. Van Johnson portrays an officer who is slightly prejudiced against Nisei, but not really mean, just a charming, naive Texas boy at heart who melts easily after a couple of officers, who are so angelic that wings would be in place instead of bars, explain the error of his ways. Sheer showmanship, skill, and a realistic touch here and there make you partially accept *Go for Broke* but after a whole succession of fairly sharp and nervy war pictures by other companies, and such hard-hitting pictures on race problems as *Lost Boundaries* and *No Way Out*, it seems like pretty weak tea and an

inexplicable regression to the Twenties. I suspect that even *The Big Parade* would have more bite to it than this toothless effort to spread the lessons of democracy.

IT TAKES A picture like *King Solomon's Mines* to bring out the best in MGM. Disentangled from its worries, moralities, and messages, it produced about the most visually delightful movie to come out of Hollywood in recent years. I doubt if any company has done a more remarkable job of location-shooting. The film owes most, I would hazard, to its photographer, R. Surtees, whose touch and style are visible in every picture in which he has worked. With a simple story line, good acting and directing, it was like a sparkling travelogue heightened by the fact that the pictures flowed naturally out of the action rather than being posed in the manner which makes most travelogues and arty films dull no matter how interesting the individual shots.

Among other recent notable MGM efforts to avoid the beaten path were *The Asphalt Jungle*, and *Teresa*. Neither is a typical studio product, but both indicate enough flexibility and good sense to keep a minimal variety inside the company and borrow talent from outside. *The Asphalt Jungle* was the work of freelance director John Huston, who remains one of the few forceful innovators in Hollywood. A dozen differ-

ent movies since this one have borrowed from it or incorporated elements of its style, its use of queer facial expressions, looming close-ups and explosive, carefully planned sequences of action. *Teresa* was also a director's picture. It was directed by Fred Zinnemann, an uneven but original and highly gifted movie-maker who has been developed chiefly by MGM. *Teresa* shows Zinnemann at his best, creating stark electrifying sequences centering about the confused behavior of a glum, neurotic youth trying to adjust himself to war and peace. Despite a fragmented story and Zinnemann's faulty knowledge of the American scene (which should have been corrected), *Teresa* is still one of the most powerful, sincere efforts of recent years, with a personal, impassioned expressiveness that has become increasingly rare as movies become more calculated.

Among the more saddening features of MGM's recent output has been the gradual deterioration of its musicals, a field in which it has pioneered and always managed to stay well ahead of its competitors. *Royal Wedding*, *The Great Caruso*, and *Mr. Imperium* are a pretty uninspired trio for the company that has produced such sparklers as *Broadway Melody*, *Good News*, and *Easter Parade*. A long succession of Fred Astaire hits has bred sufficient carelessness to finally let one loose that not only lacks the charm and

high spirits of its predecessors, but hasn't anything with which to replace them. *Royal Wedding* has long desert stretches of dry dialogue, poor songs and lyrics, clumsy efforts at comedy, and even the inimitable Astaire legs are not quite what they used to be and require compensation by trick photography. *The Great Caruso* gets by through a simple, unpretentious story and carloads of handsome technicolor sets. Lanza is nowhere nearly the equal of the job set for him and the operatic selections are mostly second-rate, as is the music in general. *Mr. Imperium* has Ezio Pinza and Lana Turner both struggling hard with organ-grinder tunes and hair-raising lyrics, and a story that creaks and sputters like an old Ford.

TAKEN AS A whole, from its inception to the present day, MGM has been a powerful, formidable presence on the American scene, an institution that has struggled vigorously with the great American problem of how to combine gigantic financial operations with some allegiance to aesthetic and ethical standards. On the whole, the MGM devotion to culture, morality, and the American way of life has been conventional, safe, and on the stuffy side, but that it exists at all, in the midst of huge commercial pressures, is something to be moderately grateful for. At present, like so many American institutions, it seems to

be in a crisis because the conditions which once made the MGM outlook a novel and progressive force in a barbaric period no longer quite prevail. Its respect for culture has generally been that of a well-meaning layman, but it could hire the right kind of authorities and people to turn out remarkably tasteful versions of Dickens novels. When it tries to tackle American history in *The Magnificent Yankee* it gets out of its depth. Its sentimental view of American virtues does not come off and furthermore is not in the least helpful in a period where it is the responsibility of even professional patriots to view their country with some realism. The result is a ridiculous caricature of history. Justice Holmes is unwittingly made to sound like an illiterate, cracker-barrel philosopher, Brandeis like a depressed shoe-clerk, and Henry Adams, one of the greatest American writers and historians, like a morbid idiot.

At present, MGM still maintains remarkable standards of decency and taste in an industry prone to utilize the easiest, most sensational means to box-office ends. Its craftsmanship is still more solidly effective than that of other companies but it does not come up with the occasional brilliant innovations which issue from other studios. The greatest weakness of MGM is the direct result of the skill it has developed at supplying entertainment for a mam-

moth international audience. Its experienced, highly professional moviemakers seem to have become self-absorbed and ingrown to the point where their knowledge of contemporary American life is at a minimum. Half a dozen other studios are about six jumps ahead of MGM when it comes to recording current U. S. speech, portraying present day types or keeping in touch with the rapidly changing moods and obsessions of the populace as a whole.

Of course, it is largely the male portion of the audience that objects to a lack of contemporaneity and MGM tends increasingly to ignore male tastes. I have witnessed several recent Metro pictures at which the audience was composed of enthusiastic females and yawning or even groaning men. I don't know what can be done about it since much the same situation prevails in publishing and the other art and entertainment fields. Women do most of the buying and call most of the tunes. What they get is a prettified, romantic version of life that lets them down with a heavy thud when they come to grips with flesh and blood males who obstinately refuse to behave like Spencer Tracy. It seems to me, therefore, that the saccharine representations you get in many movies, best-selling novels and popular magazines are as responsible for the high rate of family bust-up and divorce as strip-teasers or gangster epics.

Reefers and Glowworms

CHANDLER BROSSARD

Greenwich Village, N. Y.

BODIES, BODIES, BODIES — they lie dead all over the streets. They fall out of the sky, they stumble off the pavements and out in front of cars, they collapse in dark doorways, they float with the sewage down the East River.

A fireman on trial for shakedown has just plunged from the eighth floor of the Court House. A seven-

teen-year-old boy is killed by a policeman after a thirty-cent candy store robbery. A tormented young man chases his estranged wife up the stairs of their apartment building and shoots her while her mother watches. A hoodlum's blood bathes a street in Greenwich Village after a labor union dispute.

There are days and days when you think the entire city has gone mad.

You cannot get the bodies out of your mind, and sometimes you see your own broken, lifeless one among them as they whirl before your eyes.

You worry about your own safety. The hoodlums are on the prowl in greater numbers than ever. The other night a friend of mine, a painter, was savagely beaten up by a band of young Village hoods when he responded after one of them had made a nasty crack about the girl he was walking with. And where are the police? Where indeed! Even if you do find one he tells you nothing can be done about it. They seem to be in an evil pact with the hoods; they have always hated the "bohemians" and think that nothing shows them their place so much as being robbed and beaten by the local scum.

And now that the Senate Investigating Committee has exposed the graft and corruption among the police, their tie-ins with criminals of the worst sort, you suddenly realize that menace has surrounded you all along, from top to bottom, only you did not know it before. Thank God for ignorance.

The recent investigations have throttled the city's passion for gambling, and the populace lies gasping in confusion. Who sent those Jesus Christs anyway? We certainly didn't ask for them. You couldn't find a bookie if you ran out into the streets shouting you would bet five hundred dollars that Sugar

Ray Robinson would be knocked out by Ike Williams' second cousin, that's how tough it is. So many people have been forced to the tracks to bet that the city's industry has been seriously threatened with shutdowns.

God only knows what the poor books are doing with themselves. Some of the more desperate ones are probably turning to politics. Ke-fauver is a dirty word in these parts.

It's AMAZING, considering the myths to the contrary, how little there is to do these days in New York. (That is, unless you belong to the Copacabana set.) But maybe there really are lots of things to do, as there were in the old days, but the will to do them has vanished. This is particularly true among the intellectuals, the real ones. They have lately taken up following the fights, playing showdown with each other, and an exotic, utterly insane game called baseball (they don't even chase women anymore; it's too expensive and, who knows, the girl is probably frigid anyway).

Just as an example: a few nights ago I wandered down to a friend's house, in the Village, where there were gathered a handful of some of the sharpest minds of my generation. The editor of the most important literary magazine in the country; a startling, successful young novelist; a movie critic (and I don't mean a movie reviewer); an abstract painter;

a poet; a young anthropologist. Well, there they all were, hopping up and down, screaming into the night, lunging furiously at each other — and over what? Kafka? Proust? Hemingway? John Houston? Cultural patterns? God no! They were arguing whether Ray Robinson could have beaten Stanley Ketchel. A lovely young model floated in, her angular face fresh off the cover of *Vogue*, and asked if anybody had read Norman Mailer's last book. They almost threw her out the window.

The literary editor got up and demonstrated how Robinson feints with his left before throwing a right cross. He didn't feint quite right, and his opponent, the movie man, let him have one in the gut, and it took twenty minutes to bring the poor man around. Naturally, the movie man called up the next day and apologized: he had a manuscript he wanted to submit.

When they are not arguing about Ray Robinson, they are discussing the new young fighters hereabouts. (Obviously New York has a passion for killing in any form.) There was an unusually sharp, talented young negro welterweight named Johnny Saxton who raised everybody's hopes by beating everybody they put him in against, beating them in somewhat the same way the young Robinson beat them, coolly and arrogantly. But then the Army packed him off to become a soldier. Now his

place has been taken by an even more talented boy named Chico Vejar. He is only nineteen but he knows everything in the book and sometimes he is so flashy, so sharp he actually takes your breath away. The other night he so confused a strong-armed boy that once when the boy swung at him, Chico managed somehow to move in such a way as to send the boy diving through the ropes and into the ringside chairs. The boy has magic. All the intellectuals fear that he is just a bit fragile; but then they have always equated speed and form with vulnerability.

The extremely bright people, the real, complete combinations of sensualism and brains, are spending their vacations right here in the city, instead of racing off to Long Island or Cape Cod. This is a major revolution, when you consider that getting out of New York is an obsession with most everyone in it. These bright people now have the city completely to themselves. They are doing everything here that they would do if they went elsewhere — spending lots of money in restaurants and bars, going to the ball games and fights and sitting at ringside, sleeping late and getting drunk, wandering around the streets in the most impossible clothes, even chasing women.

Back to the Village: Another effect of the recent clean-up in the city was to sweep away al-

most all of the reefer smoking and cocain sniffing and needling down in these dark streets. It used to be — about four or five months ago — that you could stroll through Washington Square Park and without too much trouble spot — or smell — at least two or three “vipers” lighting up on marijuana, or “charge” as its devotees call it. And on a particularly nice afternoon, you could see whole groups of young bohemians — painters, writers, teachers, musicians — magnificently lit up, as the expression is, walking around among the young mothers and children and sedate old ladies, looking and feeling like a marvelous combination of Jesus Christ and a jet dive bomber. It was beautiful, really beautiful. But now you have to work night and day to locate so much as one stick of the dream weed, the cops have been so busy nabbing its smokers and peddlers.

The last man I knew who was pushing the stuff — he is called a “connection” — finally got caught by the narcotics people and given a suspended sentence, suspended because he had never been caught before. Previously I had always seen him floating dreamily up and down the streets with a sweet, self-loving smile on his then very thin face. Shortly after his police run-in, however, he trimmed his extremely long hair and mustache, got a job in a luncheonette, and got so fat and ordinary-looking I almost passed

him by one day in the street. Well, that’s life, I guess.

There have been other, more drastic, changes down in the Village recently. The writers and artists in general are gradually moving uptown, or out of town, and are being replaced by rosy-cheeked, slap-happy students from New York University. These kids have succeeded in making what used to be fine, sinister bars into annexes of their school lunchroom, and the few oldtime wolves still in operation are afraid of picking any of the girls up because they might turn out to be minors — and you know what you get for messing around with a minor.

(The college kids have even taken over most of the cold water flats, too, where a talented Raskolnikov could hide out from the world for about \$15 a month. Heaven only knows what effect this is having on the future of American culture.)

ANOTHER MILESTONE along the cultural highway: I got the scare of my life one night last week while I was returning home from the movies. Halfway down an especially dark street near Columbus Circle, I was suddenly accosted by a pack of what seemed to be man-sized glowworms. On closer scrutiny, they turned out to be a bunch of giggling kids wearing phosphorescent jackets, in red, orange, and blue. I barely made it to my house.

THE JOURNEY TO POLAND

a selection from "By the Waters of the Danube"

ALEXANDRA ORME

EARLY IN DECEMBER I finally gathered enough courage to tell Jumbo that I wanted to go to Poland. "I must see my parents and my sister after these seven years of separation," I said. "Almost all of my family have perished. If we ever succeed in getting away to the West, I shall never see them again. So I must go now, when

conditions are still fluid, because it is easier to get out now than it will be later."

"All right, all right," said Jumbo.

I repeated my arguments.

"It's out of the question, impossible," he said this time. And when I spoke to him a third time, he added: "You'll never get back — and to begin with, you'll never get there. With what papers will you go?"

What papers, indeed? I had married Jumbo a few months before the Russians came, and I had no papers of any kind except for my "Aryan" certificate and my marriage certificate. How could I hope to get a visa for Poland without having a passport? It was obviously impossible for me to obtain a Hungarian passport from the pro-Communist government. How, then, could I travel abroad? I finally hit on the idea of leaving as a repatriate — for

This is the third of several excerpts from Alexandra Orme's new book, which will be brought out by Duell, Sloan and Pearce, as a MERCURY book, this fall. The action of By the Waters of the Danube begins in 1945, in wrecked and demoralized Budapest, where former counts and princes were trying to adjust themselves to a new world, in which they had to live under the shadow of the Soviet Union. At the beginning of this installment, the heroine is about to embark on a long-awaited trip to her native Poland.

the Polish Committee was only too happy to issue repatriation papers to Poles — and of returning as a Hungarian, by dint of my marriage certificate. I would declare that I was a Hungarian by marriage, that I had been stranded in Slovakia as a result of the military operations, that I had chosen to escape from there to Poland, but now that the war was over I wished to return to my husband in Hungary.

Jumbo listened to me without interruption. Then he said that the plan might be a good one, but that he would not finance it even if he had the money.

Thus I had to find someone willing to help me financially, at least to pay for my food on a week's trip — for the trip from Budapest to Katowice took about a week unless one joined a repatriation contingent. That meant red tape, controls, questioning by the Hungarian and the Polish security police, all kinds of papers, listings, reports, sworn statements — in brief, it would have been the end of me, situated as I was.

It was a misty, muddy, sad winter. Many people still had no window-panes, and froze in the cold. Christmas came. I implored Jumbo to let me buy at least a spruce branch, but he refused even to listen when I talked about Christmas. He pretended that there were no holidays. I reminded him that there had likewise been no holidays the year

before, and I asked him to let me prepare a better supper than usual, to celebrate Christmas in this modest way, at least. But he refused even this. His son had been killed, his daughter was in some far-off place abroad, and I, he said, could easily live through two years without celebrating Christmas.

And so we ate an ordinary supper on Christmas Eve, and went to bed. No one came to see us and we did not visit anyone. Drunken and looting Russians still made the streets dangerous at night. On the following morning I found a tiny bottle of cologne next to my bed. Jumbo had put it there while I slept. But I had nothing for him, for he had forbidden me to buy anything.

IMMEDIATELY AFTER Christmas I went to see Zuzi, my Hungarian friend, the woman who had come straight from Auschwitz to Budapest in the summer, with her front teeth missing and a number tattooed on her wrist. Her flat was so wretched that it was scarcely like a human dwelling — as proven by the fact that my dog Alf, on entering the room, lifted his leg and wet the floor. It was of no use to be angry with him; he behaved in the same way in many other apartments. Zuzi's husband, who had been a Mathausen inmate, had been found alive in some Western country; she told me this the moment I came in. With her was her Polish

mother-in-law, who had come from Poland the week before.

We immediately began on the kind of guarded exchanges that were a usual tactic at the time among stranded Poles. One person might disclose, with an air of mystery, that he was engaged in smuggling, while actually he was a political courier; or, contrariwise, he might hint that he was involved in politics, while in reality he was a professional smuggler. One never knew who one's vis-à-vis was, and there was always the fear of indiscretion or of trouble. Thus every new encounter meant going through a sort of initiation, as in joining a Masonic lodge. Not everybody can have the political farsightedness of a Churchill or Roosevelt, who, encompassing the world situation with an eagle eye, instantly recognized the Lublin Communist government as the only legal and good one. Many Poles hesitated, undecided no doubt because, for lack of political experience, they had only their old-fashioned moral standards to go by. And so, Zuzi's mother-in-law, whose name was Marta, and I, too, beat about the bush for some time, though each of us knew who the other was. In the end, however, we did come to understand each other. Sixty-year-old Marta was engaged in smuggling operations between Poland and Hungary.

Because these Russian-occupied regions harbored so many thieves,

smugglers, and swindlers among their inhabitants, it might appear to foreigners that they deserved the fate of being subjected to Russian rule. But we tried to explain to them that it was not among us that the lying, cheating, swindling had originated. The small-scale crimes we perpetrated were our only available means of warding off biological extermination, and this state of affairs had been brought about by much more heinous lies and frauds than those of which we were guilty.

And so the respectable lady with whom I was talking was a smuggler. She was able to shuttle between Poland and Hungary because she had official papers witnessing that her Hungarian daughter-in-law had perished in Auschwitz and her son in Mathausen, leaving behind four orphans in Budapest. The Polish authorities were favorably disposed toward a person trying to bring four children to Poland, while the Hungarian authorities placed no obstacles in the way of Polish citizens wishing to travel in a northeasterly direction. This choice of direction was not only permissible, but even recommended. It was forbidden only to go westward.

This was why Tadzio would often say with a sigh: "Ah, if I were to tweak the nose of even a minor Soviet official, I should at once be sent to Siberia. But even if I beat the chief of the American mission to

a pulp, I would never get to the United States!"

Marta had this time come not only to get a load of Hungarian cigarettes, but also to bring back to Poland an aged Polish countess. This countess' son-in-law, who had recently acquired riches in the black market, had offered Marta fifty dollars as payment for taking the countess to Katowice.

"There still are decent sons-in-law like that," Marta commented. She proposed that I travel with her to Poland, because she needed a companion to help her with the countess, who was blind.

It was difficult in these dangerous times, she said, to look after a blind old woman and a suitcase with a double bottom. I was of the same opinion. Marta was to give me part of my food during the trip and pay for my lodging at night out of those fifty dollars. I was delighted. We planned to return to Hungary together, on the pretext that we had now established beyond doubt that the four children were orphans and that we wanted to take them to Poland. Zuzi understood what we were saying and burst out laughing. Having concluded the bargain, I went back home.

"Do as you please," said Jumbo. "But I'll have no part in it."

THE NEXT DAY I went to the Polish committee. The place looked like a poster exhibition.

Entire walls were covered with placards blazoning in Polish and Russian such slogans as "Rebuild Poland!" or "Return to your native land!" or "The place of Poles is in Poland!" or "Our recovered territories!" or "Workers and peasants!" or "Liberty, equality, fraternity!" or "Long live the army of the USSR!" or "Long live the Polish army!" or "Civil rights!" or "Down with tyranny," or "A free people in a free country!" These and other such legends suggested that the world in general was suffering from oppression and fascism, but that beyond the Carpathians everything was joy and happiness. All that was necessary was to come and see for oneself.

Wretched-looking, ragged figures lounged about in the dirty rooms. These were people released from concentration camps or forced labor battalions, or former prisoners of war, or plain beggars. In the room reserved for the officials, everyone seemed to be living in awe of the delegates from Warsaw. It was not known which individuals among the official personnel had accepted the new regime, and which ones were still resisting. There were whispering huddles of people in every corner. In one of these groups I noticed a familiar face, monstrously disfigured; it was furrowed with large double scars, suggesting welts raised by a whip; in the badly healed skin, patches of flesh showed

through, like meat bursting out of overcooked sausage. I recalled that this man had been at Mathausen. But when I greeted him I did not dare to ask him about his face. It was enough to be seeing it. Nor could I ask him to give me in confidence any details about the Committee, for we were surrounded by a crowd of people. Besides the Soviet posters had so intimidated me that I stood silent, angry at myself. Most of the people in the place were taking pengoes, zlotys, and dollars out of their pockets and making currency exchanges. Finally I made my way to the largest desk and explained my business in a few words to a young staff employee behind it.

He knew who I was, and when he told me that, my heart sank. I had not recognized him, because he had grown a beard. Perhaps I had already lied so obviously that he would not believe anything else I might tell him. But fortunately I had not had time to elaborate, and the things I said sounded plausible. This functionary who had remade his face so that he looked like a *chinovnik* out of Gogol was probably unaware that in latter-day Russia a beard is considered even more of a stigma than it was under Peter the Great — that Soviet citizens do not wear beards, and only rarely mustaches.

Apparently the man was afraid of me, just as I was of him, for he began to confess to me in a tearful

voice, throwing significant looks at the chattering crowd of dealers in foreign currencies. "I've always been a faithful practising Catholic," he whispered into my ear, as he stroked his blond goatee. "Even now I'm not doing anything wicked. The Marxist doctrine contains many Christian truths, if one only could wean it from its crass materialism."

I thought of the story about a rabbi saying to a cardinal: "If only you didn't so stubbornly cling to your Lord Jesus, we could easily unite our religions."

And what could one hold against this young man? Yet people were turning away from him with even greater disgust than from the Warsaw delegate. For the delegate, they said, was a scoundrel, a gangster, a traitor, and anything could be expected of him. But this one? He pretends to be a decent fellow, but see what he is doing. He is working for the Communist Committee. On the wall behind him is a portrait of Stalin. He is a turncoat, a renegade!

But I could not condemn him; I only pitied him as I listened to his whispering. "I facilitate passage to Poland only for those who really want to return," he said. "We don't force anyone, though the place for Poles is Poland. Whatever our new government may be, it is composed of Poles. Both Roosevelt and Churchill have granted it recognition. They wouldn't have

done so if they did not have unlimited confidence in the Soviet Union. The Poles must follow the lead of the Anglo-Saxons, their allies. The allied nations are starting to build a new democratic world. We must not stand in the way —"

"I want you to know," I interrupted him, "that I am not legally married to my Hungarian husband. The truth is that we were planning to marry, but before we had time to do it he was kidnaped by the Gestapo. I am still a Polish citizen, and now I want to return to Poland."

The young man looked at me sideways — not because I had told him that my marriage was irregular, but because he did not believe that I wanted to return to Poland.

"I want you to understand," I said, "that I actually do want to return. My whole family is in Poland. When can I obtain individual repatriation papers? For I don't want to go with a group. After living for six years in Hungary, I have so many things to settle that I cannot commit myself to any fixed date."

The next day I got my papers.

AT HOME, I hunted up my old Hungarian Red Cross certificate, and tore out my photograph from it; I did the same with my old Hungarian identification card. Then I got out my marriage certificate, and put these three Hungarian

documents into a large envelope on which I wrote my Hungarian name. Underneath it I wrote in parentheses "Auschwitz," and under that I wrote "Warsaw, Hotel Polonia(?)" After the interrogation mark I wrote the name of a well-known Communist collaborationist, whom I shall refer to here as Mr. Rosental.

Then I found an old pocketbook and stuffed it with photographs of casual acquaintances and distant relatives. Among these photographs I put the two I had torn from my Hungarian papers. Fortunately for me, my face now only remotely resembled that of the smiling young woman of a year and a half ago; only someone closely scrutinizing this picture could have realized that it was my likeness. Then I got out my knapsack and cleaned my riding breeches and washed my red pull-over, whose color seemed most fitting for this trip. And anyhow I had no other.

The next day I took leave of Jumbo. Our leave-taking was not of the customary sort: there was no agitation, confusion, or expressed emotion. We were seeing it through like a bad dream or a familiar nightmare that one feels impelled to dream to its very end.

Jumbo said: "I'll walk you to the house of those women."

"All right," I said. And then I added: "Thank you."

Jumbo left me at Zuzi's, after pressing six dollars into my hand.

After he was gone I suddenly felt terribly sorry at having imposed on him so many weeks of apprehension. I sat between Marta and the old countess, sewing my dollars into my sheepskin. Zuzi prepared supper. We ate the supper and drank vodka with it, and it cheered me up. I tried not to think about Jumbo, to erase him from my memory, even to forget what he looked like. I also tried to convince myself that we had really not been married. It is necessary to believe one's own lies in order to make others believe them. That is why it is good to include an element of truth in the lie, for that makes it easier to utter it with conviction. Then the shred of truth is a wire frame that holds together the plaster of lies attached to it. I also forced myself to think about my family and about how overjoyed they would be on seeing me. After all, they did not even know whether I was alive.

I continued my psychological discipline late into the night. Then, still dressed, I lay down on the bed, but I could not sleep. At about four in the morning we got up, and at five we went to the train on foot.

I dragged heavy bundles and suitcases with double bottoms down the stairs, while Marta led the blind countess by the hand. It was dark and cold. Zuzi stood in the doorway, a blanket over her torn nightgown, waving to us and blowing kisses from her toothless mouth.

The street was deserted, unfamiliar, shabby-looking. The sky held a few remote stars. A freezing wind was sweeping over the dirty sidewalks, and the puddles were coated with fragile layers of ice. There was a boundless sadness in the air, and I was filled with a kind of horror. My long weeks of psychological preparation had been of no avail. I was dreaming of my bed, and I longed for Jumbo. Suddenly it seemed to me that I heard my dog scratching himself in the nocturnal silence, and I almost burst into tears.

I looked at the two elderly women. Marta walked as though she were promenading. That old smuggler — the devil take her! The haughty countess stepped carefully beside her, leaning on her arm, bringing her cane down tap-tap in front of her. She had narrow lips and a nose like that of a tapir and she was seventy-eight years old. The station was a mile away — or perhaps it was two or three. The wind blew cold, yet we could not quicken our pace because of the countess. We were frozen, and had to stop frequently to thump each other on the back to get warm. About a hundred paces ahead of us, Zuzi's janitor was pushing the countess' bundles on a two-wheel cart. We could barely see him, but we could hear the creaking of the cart. Finally we reached the station.

Railroad stations seen before day-

break always seem unreal somehow. I went in feeling that I had been dreaming since the day before. The large deserted station, full of peculiar noises and odors, seemed like a place of that sort remembered from a dream. Now I was dreaming that dream again, and perhaps nothing had changed since that first dream; perhaps this was still that first dream, and I would awaken from it as a child.

Everything was queer, sleepy; objects and people moved automatically as in an endless repeated nightmarish vision, a ghostlike life in some city sunk to the bottom of the ocean. Yellow dust veiled everything, biting my eyes; and just as after a dream, I was conscious only of the impressions made by images, but not of the images themselves. I felt the stench of the soot and the Hungarian brown coal, I heard the knocking of hammers and the panting of engines and the muffled clank of clashing cars. But it was not these sounds and not distinct pictures that reached me; what came to me was a vision without contours, without background, like some sort of *fata morgana* appearing, not before my eyes, but as a projection on an inner four-dimensional screen.

I repeated to myself the slogans I had prepared: I must not think; my family will be overjoyed; I must go there. After all, everything is going smoothly; my home in Buda-

pest won't be searched, the police won't find the manuscript of my book, I shall return home safely, I shall go to the West. My thoughts became tangled.

"My child, drink a little vodka — it will do you good. You're a novice." Marta's hand was holding a bottle labeled "Extra Choice" right under my nose.

To drink vodka on an empty stomach is to pay genuine tribute to it. And vodka rewards one for it. One gulp, and the station jumped out of the ghostly nightmare. Suddenly everything was real, and not terrible, at that.

Now we really did push our way through to a horrible third-class compartment with broken windows, and we really did find seats. Our pleasure in that piece of luck overshadowed everything else. I sat down and calmly leaned out of the window to look at the sky. In my field of vision there was only one twinkling star. And I winked back, smiled at it, and sat down again on my part of the bench.

It was dark in the coach; half of the windows were boarded up. It had a bad smell, it was very dirty, but it was cozy and quiet. Here was our nest; the persons sitting round about us were our friends. But all who would come in after these were enemies to be awaited.

"Do you feel better? You're not cold any more, child, are you? How do you feel, my child?" Marta asked

me.

"Thank you, I am warm now. I feel fine."

"You can have another drink. I have another *mother* (the word meant a litre bottle of vodka) but we'd better not touch that. It's for the customs officials and security police."

At last the train started. The countess, with a solemn face and eyes closed, silently crossed herself. Thus my journey began.

OUR TRAIN ROLLED ON endlessly through gray fields covered with light snow; we passed stations cluttered with piled-up wrecked cars, machines moved out of Hungarian factories and rusting under the snow, shattered locomotives, and crowds of destitute people. It took us three hours to reach Szob, instead of the normal time of one and a half hours. Tightening the strings on our bundles, helping one another as we could, we alighted from the train. Now, in daylight, the countess seemed to have a glimmer of sight through her cata-racts, for she moved with greater alertness than before.

We had arrived at the new Hungarian frontier, and I was about to leave Hungary for the first time in six years. I was suddenly seized by panic, by an irrational fear. What was I going for? Where was I going? What did I care for my family? My decision, I said to

myself, had been dictated by nothing but silly sentimentality. Instead of trying to go to the West, even if I had to crawl there on all fours, I was going north, to Warsaw. I must return at once, while there was time. Jumbo was a wise western-European, a mature and well-balanced man.

"I don't want to go," I said to Marta. "I've changed my mind. I think I'll take this same train back to Budapest."

"Are you out of your mind, my child? You ought to be ashamed of yourself, to be so hysterical," Marta said in a scolding tone. "Why, this is like a tourist jaunt in comparison with our trips between Lvov and Warsaw during the war. Have you gone mad?"

If I only were a soldier, I said to myself, if I had given an oath of obedience, it would have been easier. But to go into fire like this, for nothing?

We began to look for a train going to Katowice. We knew that there was no direct connection, that we would have to change trains many times.

The little station was dirty, the snow was dirty, the houses were dirty, the people were dirty. A Slovakian train was standing on a side track. There was already a smell of eastern Europe—in fact, of Russia. Why should I have that impression? Perhaps because there was some sort of gloom in the air. It

was as though a terrible spiritual and physical grayness covered everything. The Soviet rule is not black, it is gray. Perhaps the Germans, Hitler's blitz Germans, were black, as though they were in mourning over their loss of centuries of cultural achievement. But the Soviet domain is gray, gray like a louse, like sticky mud, like beggars' clothes, like the faces of slaves, like a cloudy sky, like hopelessness — gray, gray.

Now Jumbo became a symbol. I could think only of him and of Budapest. The modicum of normal life one still had in that city seemed to me paradisiacal, and I remembered the Sereno with the tenderness with which Saint-Simon remembered Versailles. Even my dog Alf seemed to me a spiritualized, superior being. Why must I go into this horror?

"I wasn't joking," I said. "I really want to go back."

"Stop this nonsense, child." Marta's voice was bored.

In the afternoon our train finally started. Marta lighted candles — she seemed to have brought with her about everything she could possibly need. Monotonous, darkening fields slowly passed by outside the little window. After sunset it became piercingly cold. We were so tired that we fell silent, as though we were strangers to one another. We were alone in our compartment. The wheels clanked lazily, continually repeating a fragment of some rhyth-

mic measure. My irrational fear had gone, but I was terribly depressed, and for some reason seized by a longing to be near the Lake of Geneva, of all places. I was thinking of it as Maeterlinck's Lake of the Unborn Children.

In the flickering light of the candle, I could see the countess' silently moving lips. She was praying. Marta took out her little notebook and began to make some calculations relating to her smuggling business. For a book mark she was using a rosary, which swayed gently, keeping time with the measure of the wheels. I began to recite to myself a poem by Rilke, *Am liebsten hab' ich die Fontänen*. For some time it kept coming back in my mind, indistinct, ardently desired, like a fragment of a prayer that one tries to remember in a fever.

IN ALL WE changed trains nine times between Budapest and Katowice. But at last we were in Poland and, unbelievably, we had cleared the almost insurmountable barrier of the customs officials. We spent a night in a Polish travelers' home. The building was clean, and placards on the wall offered us welcome in our native land. A woman administrator of the institution received us cordially; she reminded me that there is a category of Poles whose only purpose in life seems to be to be of help to others. This woman was of that category.

In their unheroic moments Poles are capable of stealing, cheating, robbing, or lying — but only in their unheroic moments, for almost all Poles are capable of attaining heights currently associated with heroism. Also, there are numbers of Poles who literally never have an unheroic moment. And it is characteristic of such Poles that they are busied from morning to night on behalf of others. Perhaps in no other country do people derive so much joy from disinterested service to their fellowmen as in Poland, except perhaps in Asiatic countries, such as India. For to be so altruistically dedicated, an individual must be to some extent what the West calls naive, foolish, short-sighted, or utopian; he must be detached from the mundane things so dear to the West; he must feel that heroism is valuable for its own sake, and that it is nothing exceptional, but something almost obligatory. Many Poles have this principle in their blood, occasionally without being aware of it.

The Polish travelers' shelter had long dormitories furnished with field cots and blankets. The rooms were tidy, warm, bright. The officer who had received us escorted us solicitously, as though we were her own children who had finally returned home after a descent into hell. Everybody around us spoke Polish — I could not adjust myself to this after so many years among foreigners, and I wished that I could accost

each Polish speaking person. But I would have had to address all of them.

On one of the beds we found the girl whose canned milk had been confiscated at the customs barrier. She was smoking a cigarette, blowing the smoke toward the ceiling.

"Good evening," Marta and I said to her, and the countess echoed us tenderly: "Good evening, good evening, my child."

The girl suddenly burst into tears.

"Now, now," the countess said, hearing her sobs, "stop this. You mustn't cry. What's the matter? Can we help you?"

"I was deported to Germany," the girl said, still sobbing. The countess' words had made her feel sorry for herself. "I left my child in Cracow. My first child died, but this one has survived; it's four years old now. My husband was in the underground. He was killed. I was in a camp near the Dutch border. Shortly before everything was over, I went from Germany to Holland, because this seemed the quickest way to get home. I planned to take a boat to Gdynia. But nothing came of it; there were no boats. So I stayed with the Dutch. They're a very civilized nation, and were it not for my child, I would stay there. I learned German, and I could have learned Dutch too. I have a bachelor's degree, and I would have studied at a Dutch university. Those Dutch people who sheltered me

treated me like their own daughter.” She began to cry hysterically, throwing her cigarette on the floor.

Marta, who was spreading her belongings on her bed, walked over to the girl, and quietly stepped on the cigarette to put it out.

“But I,” the girl said, “I thought to myself: ‘If you stay in Holland, you’ll lose your child, and you’ll forget Poland.’ So I decided that I’d come here, take my child, and go to Czechoslovakia, where I’d board my child with a farmer, and enter the University of Prague. For Holland is — I don’t know how to say it” — she stammered helplessly — “they live in clover there, they don’t understand things, even if you hit them with a club over the head — not a thing. It was too foreign for me, and I thought that Prague is a Slavic city, I’d feel less like a stranger there. The Czechs are a very civilized people, it’s the West, and democracy is so strong there that the Russians won’t be able to do anything with them. And they’re farther away from Russia than Poland is. So I thought that in Prague I’d find both western Europe and a Slavic atmosphere. I was taking along the milk for my boy. The poor little one has been with strangers for years. Those good Dutch people gave me the milk for him, and that red cheese —” she was again sobbing hysterically — “and that cheese.”

“Now, now, my dear woman,” Marta said imperiously, “no one

starves in Poland. They took the food away from you just to annoy you — they have no use for your Dutch milk. It was a mistake to be rude to them” — now she was lecturing the girl. “That works with Germans, not with Poles. In this country you must use ruse, mild manners. You’ll learn that. And as for your boy, he is surely all right. My grandchildren too have been with strangers, and they’re quite young. Orphans are protected by God; people don’t let them starve. You ought to be happy to think that you have a child.”

NO ONE HAD told this young woman that it had been wrong of her to bear a child in such times. In the West she might have been told this, but in Poland child-bearing is an axiom of life. The worse the times the more precious the child.

The young woman now began to talk about her boy, and Marta talked about her grandchildren. I undressed the countess, helping her to remove her shoes and to install herself in her bed. Then I unpacked our provisions. From the adjoining men’s dormitory came the sounds of a raucous gramophone, the shrill voices of girls, deep male voices, the noise of upset chairs, the creaking of bed springs. Occasionally we could hear scraps of obscene Polish, German, Ukrainian, and Russian songs. The noise was frightful, and it was growing worse. From time to time

a door would be opened and the bawdy tumults was almost unbearable.

"Damn them, they're copulating!" cried a male voice, and the door was slammed again.

A girl tore flushed and sweating into our dormitory. "Come on," she cried to the young woman squatting on her bed. "They have vodka there and sausage. And there is a comical little Jew, mimicking a camp trusty."

"Go to hell!" the young woman answered, turning away to the wall.

"Come on, Genia! What's the matter with you? They've got sausage!"

The woman on the bed turned to the one in the doorway and stared at her. "Go f— yourself," she said in a low voice, and after an interval she added: "They've torn your blouse to shreds."

The girl walked out shrugging her shoulders. The countess lay quietly on her back on her narrow field bed, smiling patiently. Marta and I sat on the adjacent bed, eating. The girl next to us began to snore rhythmically. It was quiet now. Beyond the wall we could hear someone vomiting, then that someone was thrown out and some other person was struggling with him in the corridor. There were suppressed cries, and a female voice rose in hysterical laughter.

"Boors," said Marta. "I'll go and give them a piece of my mind."

But she did not budge from her

place, and we went on eating to the sounds of revelry coming from the young people who had been brought up in extermination camps. They had now graduated from this school and were celebrating their first night in their native land.

Marta threatened again to scold them, but she did not carry out her threat, not because she was afraid, but because she knew that nothing can stop life once it has broken bounds. And so throughout the night, life brimmed over on the other side of our door—simple, naked, obscene.

Next day we were in the train going to Katowice. It was an early commutation train for workers, which left before daybreak. Our third-class compartment was packed with laborers.

Now we are really in Poland, I thought. I am in Poland, I have managed to get here. It is a strange feeling to be sneaking into your own country, to look at it with fear as one looks at a sick parent, or someone whom you have not seen for such a long time that you must get acquainted with him all over again.

The countess was exhausted after a sleepless night. But Marta was in high spirits; everything had gone as well as could be asked, and now she had another trip behind her. I sat unheeding, thinking that today I might even see Janio; he was living in a nearby town. I drew out a crumpled cigarette from my pocket. A

young worker looked at me with a smile and proudly offered me an American cigarette. All the passengers in the coach were engaged in a political discussion. Another young worker was saying: "We're fed up with pulling chestnuts out of the fire for others. We won't fight for them a second time. Didn't all of them indeed fight for our sake? It looked that way — as if the whole gang of them had set out to fight for Poland. And what's the result? Very well then, let them now do their own fighting, if it comes to that. We're not their slaves."

"And why do they have to lie all the time?" another worker said. "Nowadays we just don't believe anyone. That's the best way. The main thing is that a man should have something to put in his stomach. And it doesn't matter who gives us bread."

When they heard that I had spent the war years outside of my country, these men told me that there still was no hunger in Poland. "We have plenty to eat for the moment. It's hard to get cigarettes, and there is a shortage of clothing. But there is plenty of work, and the wages are quite good."

We talked through all the rest of the journey. These workers were impulsive, aggressive, querulous, and energetic — typical Poles. I was struck by the fact that the majority of them were not Silesians; these men came from all parts of Poland.

THE HUGE soot-covered Katowice railroad station reminded me of German cities. This was my first experience of Katowice, and I still could not believe that I was really in Poland; I had to tell myself again and again that I was, that it was so. Everything in Silesia seemed to me unfamiliar except the language. The Polish tongue rang in my ears like the chirping of birds when one has not heard it for a long time. People who have become accustomed to the sound of birds no longer hear it. But someone hearing it for the first time after many years will distinguish the notes of each bird, and will go on listening spellbound.

The streets were crowded; it was difficult to make one's way. Boys were selling large white buns filled with slices of ham. Some of our fellow-passengers stopped to buy them. The sun was only rising, and it was still dark. Children were nudging my legs, offering to shine my shoes.

"We have only a short stretch to walk, we're going to the Hotel Metropole," said Marta.

We made our way through a throng of workers, bootblacks, porters, and beggars, and flocks of tattered children. I did not see even one man dressed like an ordinary citizen of the West. All these pedestrians were either in rags, or in the plain garb of artisans, peasants, or workers.

I led the countess along carefully,

feeling in advance how I would miss her, for I knew that her son-in-law would come for her that day and take her away, and that I would never see her again. When we came to the hotel it was almost daylight; we were told that there was no vacancy. We had been turned away from every hotel in Slovakia too, but here pleas, threats or bribes did no good at all. Apparently there actually was no vacancy. We were told to go to the dining room and wait there.

We left our nondescript bundles and our suitcases tied with strings in the lobby. Slowly I guided the countess, who held herself erect as a queen. I heard a noise coming from the dining room. Marta, who was walking ahead, suddenly drew back from the door. I stopped and looked into the room.

AMIDST A riotous tumult, a drunken man was playing the piano. His necktie was flying like a flag billowing in the wind. Sleepy-looking orchestra players were packing up their instruments. Two men, their arms around a plump blonde with a rouge-smeared face, were singing, each a different tune, neither being thrown off pitch by the other. Another drunken fellow was beating time by banging an empty vodka bottle on the table. In the middle of the room men were dancing and cavorting with the chambermaids, who giggled as they dragged their

vacuum cleaners behind them. Marta and I watched this strange vacuum-cleaner ballet. No one paid the slightest attention to us. Near us two men were embracing.

"Brother!" one of them was shouting. "So you're alive! Let me embrace you! You're alive!" Apparently the whole night was not enough to convince him that the other was alive.

The ballet continued. A chambermaid responded to being pinched by squealing like a trampled mouse. Her dancing partner bowed low to her and gallantly kissed her hand. The flushed chambermaid resumed her capering. The pianist and the dancers were now in harmony only with the rustling sound of the vacuum cleaner cords that squirmed on the floor like coiling snakes. Someone treated the members of the orchestra to vodka. They drank standing, hugging their instruments. The plump blonde started on a soldier's song. A man beside her wiped a tear out of his eye.

"O my native land, sacred, immortal!" I said. Only now did I feel I was at home, and tears came to my eyes too — particularly after I noticed two pickled mushrooms lying on the floor. I had not seen such mushrooms for six years.

"For heaven's sake! Where am I?" the countess asked, squeezing my elbow.

"At home — you're at home," Marta answered for me.



UNSTABLE EQUILIBRIUM

CHANDLER BROSSARD

THAT FRIEND I mentioned last month — the one who bullied me into reading *From Here to Eternity* — dropped around the other day and delivered an epilogue on the book. He said the major fault he had to find with it was the probable bad effect the editors had had in helping to shape it. That is, in the insidious imposition of their personal taste — he called it middlebrow academicism — on something as strange and as new as the talent and material of Mr. Jones. He said there was no telling how really good the book might have been if Jones had developed himself and had been able to “arrive” without the aid of these so damaging editorial guides.

This raised the whole complicated

question of the relationship between author and editor. What is a good editor and what exactly is a good author-editor relationship?

It is difficult to imagine, offhand, any other relationship that is quite as volatile as this, where there is as much tension, fear, respect, hatred, responsibility, and so on. The only one that comes to mind is the relationship between a psychoanalyst and patient who is going through his first three months of analysis. This comparison is especially true when the writer is just starting out and the editor happens to be his elder. The writer submits his work with the terrible fear that the editor might castrate him, while at the same time if the editor somehow

praises him, or encourages him more than he criticises him, the author is more than ready to shout that the editor is the kindest, most perceptive, beautiful-souled person he has ever had the amazing fortune to meet. (I have the feeling that this sort of thing goes on to a much greater extent in America than it does elsewhere, and I believe it has a lot to do with the profound need Americans have, mostly men, to establish protegee — master, neophyte-hero relations. It is an expression of the national neurosis. I'll have to go into it further sometime.)

The greater responsibility lies, as I have said, with the editor. It is up to him to keep a certain distance and be on the lookout — as good psychoanalysts are — for intrusion of himself personally into the writer's development, for any identification with the writer, for any disproportionate enthusiasm and dependence, or distrust and fear, emanating from the writer.

The finest real literary editor I know anything about is Ezra Pound * (I'll take up the question of magazine editors later on). What distinguished Pound from all the other people involved in the same business

* New Directions has just re-issued Pound's book *ABC of Reading*, written by him in 1934. It is alive and bursting with insights that are as basic and fructifying as spermatozoa. A great book, and it costs only a dollar and a half.

was that he did not have a fixed, unalterable, academic concept of "good writing," that he had a fabulous eye for what was alive and what was dead in language, and that he could spot immediately what was original in a particular writer — what there was about him, however hidden, that was his very own — and could then aid him, if at all, in that special direction. Pound in his day had many pupils, but perhaps the most successful, certainly the best known, of them all, was Ernest Hemingway. Pound immediately saw what Hemingway's talent was, when Hemingway was just a young reporter entering the booby-trapped fields of literature, and his teaching of Hemingway gave Hemingway the courage to be himself, a job that really takes a hell of a lot of courage. He did not attempt to make, or even encourage, Hemingway to write the way he, Pound, would write if he were working in the medium of fiction. (Before I forget it, one of the most acute and illustrative things Pound said about fiction was that every story has its own form.) When most editors speak of giving something form, they mean making it into a "package."

These attributes of Pound's may seem, at first glance, to be rather natural and to be expected of any editor, but they are actually the rarest things to find in an editor and they spell the difference between a real editor and just a guy who copy-reads manuscripts.

LET'S LOOK into the business of "good writing." It is perhaps the most dangerous concept since Lombroso announced to the world that people with high foreheads have more on the old ball than people with low foreheads. Only this concept hasn't been discounted yet. Nearly every editor I have ever met has the same idiotic idea of good writing: that writing which is cleanest and looks the most polished. You get an editor with this bug in his head and there is no estimating the amount of hell he can raise with a piece of fiction that has originality, that has its own style. The final stage in the operation of this principle is to be found in a weekly magazine known at one time for its humor. Because all its editors have this strait-jacketed idea of good writing, every story and article and column in the magazine reads exactly the same, despite the fact that they were written by men whose characters are as diverse as Singapore and Dublin.

The general opinion about this magazine is that everybody who writes for it is a master of style. Now then, it is time this good writing and style business were cleared up. The only concept of style that has any meaning whatever is that style is relative to the material and the author, and the true stylist is that man who writes in such a way as to bring out most fully the possibilities of his material and his own mind. The

great problem, of course, is the agonizing search the author must go through to discover his own style; few writers manage it and that is one of the reasons there is so very little first rate literature. Rimbaud was just as great a stylist as Proust, the *Daily News* murder story writer as fine a stylist as S. J. Perelman. Imagine a sports or a murder story being written by, say, Willa Cather, and you will see what I'm getting at.

The sad case of another friend of mine, a short story writer, comes to mind at this point. This young man used to submit his first short stories to a magazine fiction editor who was a writer himself. The young man was learning to write, so he took everything the editor said as words of the gospel — change this, turn this image this way, don't use words like this, don't let this character dangle this way, and so on. He took his advice and worked accordingly. Well, the upshot of it was that he suddenly realized, in the nick of time, that as a short story writer he was developing as a sub ego of the editor in question, and that this way of writing, and thinking, had nothing to do with him at all. He thanked God for the illumination and hasn't sent a story to this editor since. In this case, the writer has managed, through extraordinary tilling of his own garden, to develop a really original way of writing. Every time he hears the word taste, a favorite way of the editor's to distinguish

vulgarity from style, he winces. This editor wasn't a true stylist; he was a mannerist.

The same may have been the case with brother James Jones and his editors, though this is just a speculation. The book did look as though it were written by three or four different people. There was such a superabundance of Thomas Wolfe's rhetoric in it as to make me wonder if Jones' editors did not encourage him to write this way because they thought it was the last word in lyricism and meaning. It is quite possible that they regard this style, with a dash of Walt Whitman and a sprinkling of Robert Frost, as the authentic American style. (This brings up another remark of Ezra Pound's to the effect that there is no such thing as "sensitive" writing, there are only sensitively conceived situations and ideas.) I hope, for their own sake and that of any writers who may come under them in the future, that this is not so, for this particular type of lyrical or sensitive writing is as dead, as cliché, as meaningless, as uncontemporary as New Orleans jazz is today.

The essential responsibility these editors had, when they were faced with the Jones manuscript, was to search intensively for what it was that Jones had that nobody else had, and to see that he worked this out and did not follow some other, easier trail. If they did not do that, then they failed as editors. It will be

most interesting to see what sort of book Jones turns out next. My guess is that the contaminating touch has been put on the poor boy, and his next effort will be even more strongly derivative and self-conscious than the first. God help him.

THE RESPONSIBILITY of the magazine editor is a peculiar one. He is in the business of encouraging writers to write for his magazine, and nothing pleases him more than the arrival of a young writer with talent who can do all kinds of things for the editor's magazine — write articles and fiction for him, and even suggest ideas for the magazine. However, sometimes this writer is a really good one, and when the editor realizes this he often asks himself (or should ask himself) should I tell him that at best magazine writing is just high grade journalism and that if he continues it his talents will inevitably be cheapened by it? And if I do tell him this, what shall I tell him about how to make a living, as he has been by writing for us? And what if he really doesn't have the deep talent in the first place, and I wind up being responsible for doing him out of a good magazine writing career? And if I do this several times, how in hell will I put out a good magazine? Should I keep my big mouth shut and go on squeezing this secondary juice out of the guy? And so forth, ad nauseum.

One thing I would like to do

around here, but can't for obvious reasons, is to advise 99 per cent of the people who send us stuff over the transom that the best thing they could possibly do for themselves, and indirectly us, is to stop writing, first thing in the morning. Save them wear and tear and time and who knows maybe they could find happiness where they least suspect — in some good, simple, honest job.

SPEAKING OF WRITERS developing in terms of editors, there is a book on my desk now which could never have been written if an editor had so much as scratched his ear over its prose.

The book is *The Gates of Hell*, a collection of short stories by Calder Willingham. Willingham, who is the

author of *End as a Man* and *Geraldine Bradshaw*, is not a writer of short stories, despite what the book jacket says. He is more properly a writer of fictional pieces (let's bury the old short story) and it is because of this, because he works in a new form of his own, that this collection is as original and lively as a two-headed baseball. In fact, Willingham is the only serious young writer in the country who is genuinely funny.

One of the pieces — it reads almost like an essay after a pre-frontal lobotomy — begins this way. "When you see some insignificant flop lying half dead in the gutter, do you ask yourself, 'Why didn't that happen to me?'" That should give you an idea of the ride you're in for. Hold on tight: you're on your own.

THEY chased the Negro boy down the street in their car. He was running down the street and looking at the boys in the car chasing him and shrieking Oh! Oh! Oh! in a shrill voice. They pulled up abruptly at the end of the street and jumped out of the car. The Negro boy stopped running and stood there against the wall of the house. Ohhh! he shrieked. Kill the son of a bitch, Jimmy! one of the boys shouted. Oh please don't hit me! the Negro boy shouted. I haven't done anything to you. The boy that got to him first hit him in the face and he fell down against the wall. Then the other three boys were around him kicking at him and grabbing him. Beat the s-t out of him! they shouted. Let the black bastard have it! Oh please! Oh please don't! Oh please! the Negro boy kept pleading in his girlish voice as the first boy grabbed him by the coat lapels and yanked him up and held him against the wall. — C. B.

DOWN TO EARTH

the man-creature

ALAN DEVOE

ONCE UPON A TIME, on an ancient planetary morning, there was loosed on the forest trails or the sunny windswept uplands a new kind of animal. It looked, in an approximate way, like one of the great apes, enough so that we may surmise this animal and the apes to have stemmed, ages upon long ages before, from a common ancestor.

This new animal snuffled the earth's pungent airs with such nostrils as those of other animals, it pressed against the earth with horny paw-feet clearly akin to the feet of foxes and lizards, it displayed in every way an animal anatomy and animal physiology. But in it, also, was a new thing. This was a consciousness grown to self-consciousness. This

was the attendant infllood, sub-analytical but sure as instinct, of awareness of a new kind.

The new animal, Man, crept quietly along the forest paths, peered upon the green garden of the creation and upon his fellows, and squinted up at the over-arching sky, in the light of certain immediate and spontaneous knowings of a kind that Coleridge called his primary intuitions. These were not complexly thought things, not elaborations of analysis, not guessworks. One may say, simply, that they *were*. They lodged in this animal, by the nature of his being, as it is lodged in a new-hatched turtle to "know" which way lies the sea, or as it is lodged in a weasel to know that the diet for it is blood, or as it is given by immediacy to a grouse-chick to crouch when the hawk screams overhead. These were, exactly speaking, the new animal's animal equipments.

It had a sense, before argument, below articulation, of its own *anima*: an indwelling self at its center, an immaterial principle of captaincy and organization, an I-being behind its willings and choosings and expressions in behavior. The creature would not have dreamed of putting it like this. Such words come later — much, much later — when intellect struggles to analyze and re-state the felt. At first, in the morning of the world, there was only the knowing, only the blood-thing, only the cer-

tainty of a woodchuck certain that the October frost means Dig. There was the reality of the *anima*, instant, immediate; and this was animal faith.

In the surety of this animal conviction, the man-creature peered upon the thronging garden of his fellow-creatures and with instant empathy read *anima* there too. A self looked out at him, from behind the eyes of his brother. Everywhere there were kinships to him: the living hawk, the living wolf, the living tree, even the living water. This was all a brotherhood alight with *anima*, here bright, here dim, but all touched and set quivering by something of that principle which lived, from the first instant of immediate faith, within his own stunningly empowered self.

EMPOWERED, YES; and here animal faith touched upon that which fairly sent the man-creature prostrate with awe and love and the shivering rapture of the numinous. *Numen inest*. Lo, lo, here is a Power at work. Behold all this breathing, dancing, shimmering Creation, all somehow infected with being and sustained. In and over and through and beyond all this, creating, sustaining, responsible . . . behold the overbrooding of Great Spirit, the One, the Centrality, the That Which Whence All Proceeds, the unutterable Ground-of-Being. The man-creature, once again, of course

did not put it like this, did not conceive of it in a vanity of words. Again, this *was*. This was something anterior to churches, anterior to theology, cons before and below any brave and pitiful attempts at formulation. This was the felt thing, the sensed thing, the lauds as spontaneous as birdsong, the worship as instant as the dimmer worship a woodchuck gives when it stretches grateful on the good pasture-earth under the August sun. The thing was *there*, in the man-creature's heart, as unarguable as song, as native as sweet sleep.

These things were in the primal animal faith, and so was another knowing. It had been good, before now, for an animal to feel a need and instantly to act upon it, to snarl when snarling came to the throat, to kill when killing prompted and to stop when the prompting stopped, and to do all such things in an unmeditating ease of animal innocence; for such was the nature of the animal. But now there was this new animal, with new ingredients in its nature, a light of added recognitions. There was the sense of the self and the other; and with this an empathy making a demand of consideration. There was awareness of fellow-powers and of preeminent Power; and with this a requirement to self-discipline. There had come into being, as this new animal's natural equipment, moral conscience. Once again, and finally, it is to be said

that the man-creature did not of course elaborate its native certainty in any such wordy way as this, far less construct at once any of those specialized ethics which vary from time to time and place to place. There is an ethic below all specialized ethics, a moral sense so primary as to defeat any attempt to explain it away as a particular cultural invention. That was what the man-creature had; and he had it by immediacy, by animal faith, by virtue simply of his existence as the kind of creature called Man, as woodchucks hibernate by virtue of their nature as woodchucks and as red-eyed vireos, by their nature, build delicate cup-nests of shredded bark and sing sweet songs in a green glen.

It is a habit of naturalists to keep urging that we think of man in his animalness, in his aboriginal estate as earth-creature. We are to think of him divested of all his artifices, his pretenses, his concealments, and reduce him for our contemplation to what in fact he forever is: the man-animal that was born into being out of a great company of earth-creatures, the man-animal that hatches out of an egg very much as birds do or lizards or indeed tadpoles, the animal whose body dies and corrupts and returns to earth even as the body of a raccoon or the body of an oak-tree, and the animal who, while he awaits this event, is under the same animal necessities

as all his brothers. A naturalist, in so far as his viewpoint may be put in a sentence, is forever urging that man remember his original nature as an animal.

The key-word in this sentence, however, is the "his" before "original."

Omit that, under-weigh it, and a naturalist may fall into sorry fallacy or his readers into sorry misunderstanding of him. It is man as *man* . . . the original creature, the primal species *Homo Sapiens*, the fresh Adam in the morning of the garden . . . that a naturalist would cherish and recommend. It is not man as ape, nor as mere bundle of newt-twitch, nor as "just another animal." It is the man-creature seen whole, the entirety of him, in that balance of flesh-and-spirit which is aboriginally his unique nature as he issues (along with the woodchucks with *their* natures, and the apes with theirs, and the vireos with theirs) out of the womb of creation.

What sort of creature is this, our original Man, our first man, our Adam fresh-minted and not yet fallen into any lopsidedness of crooked will or any forgetting of those bone-sure knowings that are the initial revelation to him?

Well, he is hairy, he has five animal senses, he has bladder and bowels, he is as made for breeding as rabbits are or opossums or porcupines or any other God-sprung animal under the good sun. A naturalist

must recommend that we look steadily at these animal facts, and look at them in a frankly open and wholesome spirit of acknowledgment and acquiescence, so that we shall not, by unhealthy pretendings, get to be smirkers and sniggerers about these animalities. They are no "nastier" than a vireo-nest, no more alien or horrid in the earth-scene than the swing of the seasons. Looking at them in this spirit, we can relegate them to their right place, and find out that there is nothing sickening or scary, and just say quietly: That's that.

When we have done this much, have we exhausted the facts about our man-creature? Have we described him fully, or even rightly, when we have catalogued his hairs and charted his nerve-twitches and had a look at how his bowels move? Why, certainly not. We have said only as much as might be said about a woodchuck. Simply as a matter of accurate natural history, simply as a matter, if you like, of correct classification, we have to describe our Man in terms of a great many other and a completely different kind of attributes.

IT WOULD BE a wretched naturalist who would talk about woodchucks only in terms of those elements of (so to speak) lower woodchuckness which woodchucks share with fish. Mammals and fish do have a great many attributes in common

and in brotherhood. The Creation is all One. But in a mammal there are tremendous developments above and beyond fishness. Similarly, a bird, merely biologically and evolutionally, has a lot of snake in its nature. It would be false to bird-truth to deny it, and a dangerous sentimentality to avert our eyes from the snake-part of the whole bird. But what kind of naturalist would it be who meant, when he said "bird," only so much of actual bird-nature as a robin shares with a garter-snake? Feathers, it is true, are developments of scales. But oh what a new and strange and special glory has come with the gift of wings!

Whenever a naturalist writes of the man-creature's sensualities, his mammalities, there are some readers who profess to find themselves shocked, and some others who suppose the naturalist has intended, by his explicit talk of this down-to-earth sort, to degrade man into "just another animal." No naturalist, older than adolescent, is himself shocked by that part of Adam which is mammalian, or could derive pleasure from shocking others. If he sometimes does utter such explicit talk, it is because he loves the whole truth about Adam and is persuaded that all of it is both significant and

decent. No naturalist who has studied man as candidly as he studies chipmunks, or who indeed has ever examined honestly into his own heart, can think that the mammal-part of Adam is the whole of him.

The dreams are as real as the horny paw-feet. The moral conscience is *there*, a fact as real as a feather. If we look fully at the man-creature, at the native creaturely equipments of old Adam on the forest path, we have to say, in any proper natural history of what we see, that there gleams at the core of him the shimmering and indestructible fact of spirit. If we would pretend to any attitude of a whole realism, we have to note, in this man-animal, a distinction of new discernments. We have to remark that—as bird-wings are a new thing, above and beyond snake-scales, or as mammalian fur is a new thing, above and beyond feathers—here, in the moment of the creation of Adam, here in this biped standing on the forest path and staring about him with *anima* abruptly alight with unprecedented understandings, here is a new thing again, exalting this creature to a new realm. There has blazed into being, as unmistakably as a blossom from a seed, that new essence we must call a soul.

Draughts of Old Bourbon



How To Think About Truman

WILLIAM BRADFORD HUIE

ONE of the rewards in operating a magazine like *The Mercury* is the startling reactions you can get by simply publishing a few plain facts. A fact, evidently, is a phenomenon in the world today. Most publishers can't afford to publish facts; they are prisoners of what they define as "good taste," of pressure groups, and of "sound business"; and they justify all their trimming by complaining that "the public just won't tolerate facts." The result is that you can calmly state a fact and be surprised to discover that you have started a riot. Psy-

chiatrists will begin analyzing you; enemies you have never seen will begin plotting your destruction; and all sorts of people will begin wondering about your strange motivations.

In our May issue we published an unassuming little bit called *Is Truman Honest?* It wasn't our "lead" piece; we didn't regard it as particularly important; but here is what happened. The magazine became what the columnists call a "collector's item"; we sold 128,000 copies — and could have sold twice as many more; in some areas we were

selling at a dollar a copy; the Truman water boys activated at least sixteen Government lawyers who began flying around at Lord knows how much public expense; and our telephone lines in both Maryland and New York suddenly had enough taps on them to give us stage fright were we not accustomed to addressing large audiences.

The cause of all this commotion was the statement of two or three plain facts. Fact Number One: *that Harry Truman is an habitual liar.*

Now why should this fact startle anyone? Is there a literate person in America who will contend that Truman is not a liar? Truman's best friends enjoy their heartiest laughs by recounting the quantity and quality of his lies.

That Truman is a liar is no matter of judgment; it's a matter of record. Webster defines a liar as "a person who knowingly utters falsehood"; and for thirty years Truman has followed a policy of *knowingly uttering falsehood*. Any person who contends otherwise is an emotional partisan who wants to argue politics instead of considering a character as he really is.

Take a recent example. On the eve of the MacArthur hearings Truman had a statement issued to the effect that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had *recommended* the dismissal of MacArthur. Then each of the Joint Chiefs got on the stand and pointed out that he had not *recom-*

mended the dismissal; he had only *concurred in* a decision made by the President and others. There is a vast difference here: the difference between the truth and a lie. So whatever your position in the Truman-MacArthur controversy, here is a judgment on which all reasoning men can agree: Truman opened the hearings by telling the American people another lie.

Truman deliberately approved a statement which he knew was a lie; and he did this, not to aid the American people, but to confuse them for his possible benefit.

Our stating this fact that Truman is a liar doesn't mean that we "hate" Truman; or that we are trying to "smear" Truman; or that we have become a "Republican organ"; or that we have been hired by the tide-lands oil people. (When we published the story of Big Jim Folsom's bastard boy, he said Wall Street was trying to crucify the Friend of the People.)

As a man we rather like Truman. He's a friendly cuss — almost pure humbug. A great guy to have with the boys over in the corner of the Legion hall when you pass the bottle and tell your funniest story: he'll laugh like hell and pound you on the back. He's a good man for a clam bake, or a poker party, or for just sitting around the armory chewing the fat and spitting on the floor. We like him — but we also like our yard man.

As a President, of course, Truman is a different matter. Late in the afternoon when we have had our ration of bourbon we are quite capable of chuckling at all the ironies of the Truman success story, but later in the evening, when we reflect on Tom Paine and Tom Jefferson and all the blood and anguish and hope which have gone into the building of this country, and when we ponder the implications of this country's being delivered to a Truman gang in 1951 — then we don't feel like chuckling. Which brings us back to Presidential lying.

Lying is epidemic in the world today. Lies everywhere are being used as weapons against free men; and if any vestiges of freedom are to survive in America, a few of us must retain our ability to detect a lie when we hear one and to recognize a liar when we see one. A few of us, too, will have to deny that it is proper or acceptable for a President of the United States to employ lies as a political tactic.

Truman's Legend of "Rugged Honesty"

Our Fact Number Two, *that Truman is a deadbeat*, seemed to surprise even a few MERCURY readers. This is because the lie of Truman's "rugged honesty" has been so assiduously repeated by stuffed-shirt newspapers like *The New York Times*. *The Times* even allowed its Sunday editor to state piously: "Truman paid in full

all the debts resulting from his bankruptcy." A lie that insults every intelligent American.

The facts are these: all his adult life Truman has been classified as a poor credit risk; he failed in the pants business in 1922; he didn't pay those debts; he didn't bankrupt because his public income wasn't garnishable; he let all his creditors sue him; he never once defended an action against him; but after he began running for President his political handlers "settled" most of the old claims at ten cents on the dollar; then Truman and his assistant liars — including *The New York Times* — turned the story completely around and converted it into an "inspiring legend" of the "ruggedly honest little man" who insisted on paying all his creditors *in full*.

From 1922 until he became President, Truman was regarded as a deadbeat even by his friends. He couldn't borrow a dollar on his own signature; he didn't have a bank account; he lived in his mother-in-law's house and owned nothing; and the only loan he got during this period was the one for \$35,000 on his mother's farm which the Pendergast gang gave him out of the school funds of Jackson County. True to his past form, Truman then refused to pay the county a penny of tax on the land or a penny of interest on his loan, and the county had to foreclose.

None of this was because Truman

didn't have income. From 1934 on he and Bess together drew at least \$20,000 a year from the Federal Government. It's just that he is not the sort of man who regards seriously his responsibilities to his society.

One of the statements which Truman's only brother, Vivian, is reported often to make is: "Harry don't know nothing about money. If he had a million dollars today he'd be broke tomorrow."

So two of the ironies of our time are these: Truman, with a lifetime record of shirking his personal responsibilities, is now touted as "ruggedly honest." And a man who not even his mother or his brother ever thought knew anything about money, now controls the biggest-spending government in the history of the world!

And here is an added irony: a nation built by sweat and thrift — by mothers hoarding pennies in sugar bowls — is at last delivered into the hands of wastrels who have never been able to pay their own debts or to provide roofs for their heads!

These facts are not published out of malice or anger; they are published out of a novelist's understanding of the everlasting nature of men.

Can Truman Be Classified As Decent?

Friends of ours have hastened to warn us that we shouldn't print such

unpleasant truths about a man who, whatever his shortcomings, happens to be President of the United States. "Of course he is a liar and a dead-beat," they have said, "but the People like to think that the President is a pretty decent guy. The people will turn on any magazine or newspaper which is contemptuous of the President."

To this we have several replies. THE MERCURY is not written or edited for the People. The People don't read it. It is written and edited for a few individuals who like to think and reason and who want to contemplate their world as it is and not as we wish it were. THE MERCURY makes no pretensions to influence among the People, or the Common Men, or the Average Men; we desire only to be the worthy companion of those who are seeking the truth — and truth-seekers are no more numerous today than they have ever been.

The view that the People want to consider the President a "pretty decent guy" brings us to our Fact Number Three: *Is Truman Decent?*

A thoughtful advocate will have trouble making a case for Truman's decency. Throughout his political career he has, by choice, been arrayed against the forces of decency. As a Pendergast tool he has always been the candidate of ballot thieves, whores, saloon keepers, racketeers — all the baser elements of society — and he has been the enemy of all the

nobler elements. This, too, is a matter of record, of established fact, not of opinion.

Most Presidents of the United States have, at least once in their careers, been associated with a reform movement. They have denounced graft and urged grand juries to indict the grafters. But not Truman.

Nineteen of Truman's closest associates have gone to jail.

Truman's first business venture, with a war buddy, only ended in failure: that was the pants business. But his second business effort, the building and loan business, in 1925, also with a war buddy, ended with that buddy going to jail for "mis-handling public funds."

If you stay around Truman long enough, the chances are that you'll either go bankrupt or to jail.

On each occasion when Truman was elected to the Senate, the number of fraudulent votes cast by his gang exceeded his majority. He quite literally owes his position to crimes against this society.

Has Truman ever denounced the ballot thieves? No, he only denounces those decent persons who try to prosecute ballot thieves.

Against Truman's opposition the decent people of Jackson County, Missouri, were finally able to send some of their ballot thieves to jail. Truman's contribution to decency was to pardon these ballot thieves as one of his first official acts when

he became President. He did more than pardon them: he restored their civil rights so that they could be useful to him in the next election.

In 1946 Truman's gang won an election in Jackson County by fraud, and the decent citizens finally stirred the Department of Justice to investigate. But investigation became impossible when thieves dynamited the courthouse and made off with the ballot boxes. Truman, by amazing coincidence, happened to be in Kansas City the night of the theft. When reporters rushed to his hotel to get a denunciation of this crime against society, Truman gave them only a cold and insolent "no comment." Every reporter left with the impression that the President approved the theft; and only the most naive observer could avoid the conclusion that the President had prior knowledge of the theft.

One of the laughing fat boys around Truman in 1947 was Edward F. Prichard, Jr., the "boy genius" of the Administration. "Old Prich" had been a protege of Justice Frankfurter; he had been counsel for the Democratic National Committee; then he had been aide to Truman's bourbon-drinking pal, Chief Justice Fred M. Vinson.

In the 1948 Presidential election "Old Prich" exuberantly stuffed 254 forged Democratic votes into a Kentucky ballot box, and off he went to prison. But Truman quickly commuted the sentence, and "Old

Prich" will be in good shape for the 1952 heats.

Truman now heads by far the most corrupt government in the history of the nation. This, too, is a fact, not a judgment. Most Americans now alive think of something called Teapot Dome as our most despicable example of corruption in government. What was involved in Teapot Dome was a \$100,000 bribe paid for government favor. To the Truman gang this is chicken feed. Truman has former bootblacks who have gotten more than the Teapot Dome pay-off; and he is surrounded by multi-millionaires who have made their millions manipulating government favor.

John Maragon has been given the prison sentence, but Maragon gave Truman the first of the deep freezers.

The favorite punching bag of comedians and columnists is Major General Harry Vaughan. Vaughan is useful to all those unrealistic Americans who find it necessary to believe that the President is a "pretty decent guy" surrounded by grafting cronies.

But MERCURY readers should understand this fact: any objective analysis will disclose that Vaughan is somewhat superior to Truman both in intelligence and in moral standards. All the vitriol over the deep freezers has been hurled at Vaughan, yet Vaughan only got the *second* of the deep freezers. The poor

fellow has to take *seconds* around the White House, yet most of the sarcasm is directed at him.

Senator Paul Douglas, a Democrat, is now trying to create a Senate Committee which can strive to re-establish decent standards in our government. We predict a highly successful legal career for any advocate who can prove before that committee that Truman is decent.

Truman Represents The New Barbarian

How is it that a man with Truman's record can still be in such a position that he can command the Democratic nomination next year and may be reelected President?

A portion of the answer, we believe, was supplied in a commencement address at Rice Institute by President Lewis Webster Jones, of the University of Arkansas.

"The direst threat to America," Doctor Jones declared, "is from our own new barbarians. This barbarian is the mass man, the self-satisfied man who accepts as part of the order of nature all the wonderful achievements of his own civilization. He takes these achievements as given, feels no personal responsibility for the society which has made them possible. He expects to use and exploit them. He prides himself on being the average man. If he admires anything outside himself, it is the 'smart operator,' the getter-by, the fixer."

All over the land during the commencement season thoughtful speakers decried the growing influence of — and deference to — this new barbarian. Roger P. McCutcheon, dean of the graduate school of Tulane University, declared: "Today a lazy student who receives a failing grade is likely to be diagnosed as 'maladjusted.'"

The power to elect a President in America is slipping into the hands of this new group of barbarians, and their idol is the common man, the mediocre man, the undisciplined man, the irresponsible man, the debt-evader, the liar, the fixer, the smart operator, the three-shell artist. Truman's whole career fits him to be the idol of these barbarians.

And this brings us to the most disturbing of all the conclusions in the Truman story. Truman is an effect and not a cause. He is a symptom of the sickness which threatens the majesty and grandeur of America. A nation may have been conceived in freedom; it may have known greatness; its cause may have once been the cause of mankind; but it always gets a Truman once it begins to make excuses for sloth and to take its pride in mediocrity.

An Explanation of Our Reprint Policy

The sale of reprints of our articles is now a thriving sideline at THE MERCURY. It is likely that we sell more reprints than any other maga-

zine. We expect to sell at least one million reprints of the Truman article from the May issue, and perhaps 100,000 reprints of the Folsom story from the June issue.

These reprints may be ordered by mail or by telephone, in any quantity, and any American, either in jail or out, can buy them. Our requirements are only two-fold: 1) that the purchaser be able to pay for them, and 2) that he make no changes. Once the purchaser has our reprints in hand he can either tack them on the walls of *pissoirs*, or he can mail them to his relatives, or he can attempt to "influence public opinion" in any manner that he chooses. We can no more control what happens to our reprints than we can control the sale of our magazine.

We do not inquire into the prospective purchaser's habits, customs, or beliefs. He may be a vegetarian, Communist, Fascist, Baptist, Rotarian, or Seventh Day Adventist. If he can pay, and if he agrees not to change the text, he can buy our reprints in the same manner that he can buy the entire magazine from a news stand.

During the past few weeks some of our friends have complained that they are receiving our reprints from organizations or individuals which they consider "dangerous" or "scurrilous" or "subversive" — organizations which "should not be allowed to associate themselves with THE

MERCURY” and which may “hurt THE MERCURY by their association.”

We appreciate this concern on the part of our friends, but we ask them to understand our position. We can no more sit in judgment on the purchasers of our merchandise than can the merchandisers of aspirin tablets. We can't process all our orders for reprints through the FBI to determine whether we're doing business with Fascists or Communists.

If we refuse to fill the order of a known subversive, all he has to do is re-submit the order in the name of his brother-in-law, and we are powerless to prevent his getting our reprints.

We can assume responsibility only for what we say. We mail our magazine only to our subscribers. If someone else chooses to mail either our magazine or our reprints, we cannot assume responsibility for his views.

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